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September 1994

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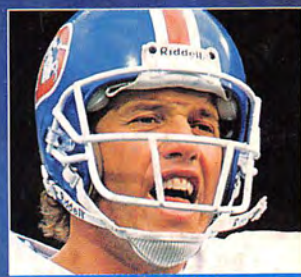
1994 NFL PREVIEW

*Steve Young should be
all smiles come January,
when he and the Niners
mine Super Bowl gold*

■ Mike Ditka
and Bob Trumpy
analyze the
coming season

■ Bill Parcells:
Crafting a winner
in New England

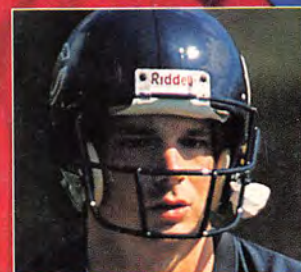
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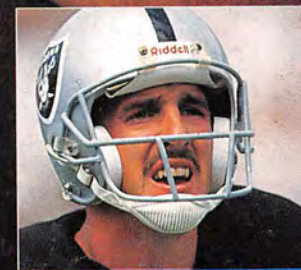
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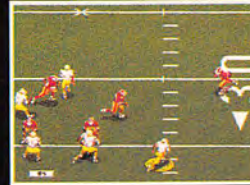
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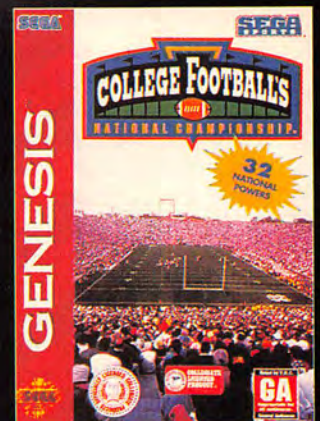
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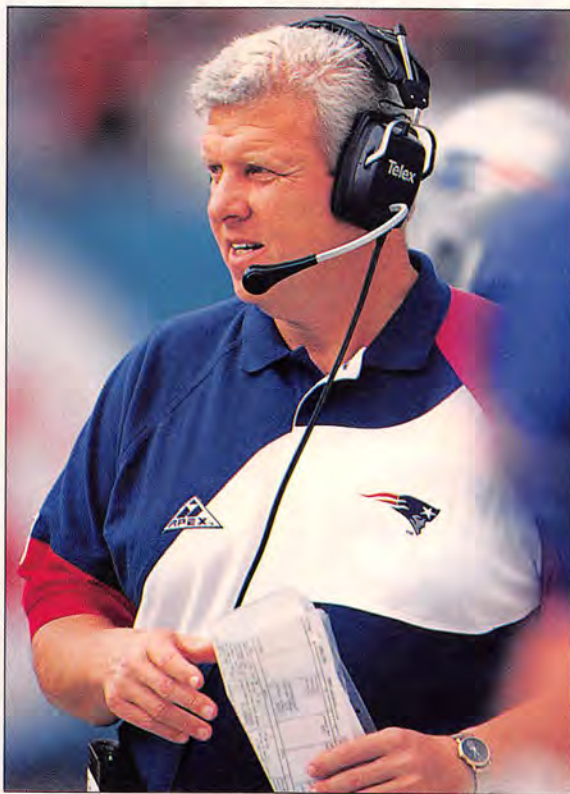
EDITOR'S NOTE

DURING ONE OF OUR recent discussions about pro football story ideas for the upcoming season, one of our editors threw out a familiar name: Bill Parcells. The name was familiar to us because Parcells was a special contributor to *INSIDE SPORTS* during the 1992 season. Of course, Parcells is also a familiar name in New York, where he won two Super Bowls with the Giants, and New England, where he may well be on his way to another with the Patriots. However, regardless of whether Parcells can become the first coach in NFL history to win Super Bowls with two different teams, he already has been a knight in shining armor for a franchise that sorely needed one.

That thud you heard a few years ago was the Patriots hitting rock bottom. It was hard to tell what was worse: the Pats' on-field performance—they were 9-39 from 1990 to '92—or their public image, which took a pounding from players such as Zeke Mowatt and Irving Fryar and owner Victor Kiam. But things began to turn around when Parcells was hired before the '93 season, and when Robert Kraft, a lifelong Bostonian, purchased the team earlier this year. Kraft made it clear he was committed to keeping the Patriots in Foxboro—the previous owner, James Busch Orthwein, wanted to move the team to St. Louis—and fans responded by purchasing 6,000 season tickets on the day Kraft's purchase was announced.

Kraft's presence is a key ingredient for Parcells' success in New England, according to contributing writer Greg Garber, who as a writer for *The Morristown Daily Record* and *The Hartford Courant* covered the Giants in every one of Parcells' eight seasons as coach and who wrote our Patriots feature on page 60. "Parcells is very comfortable now," Garber says. "Before he was hamstrung terribly by management. Orthwein knew he was going to sell the team and wasn't going to spend much money. Now there's an owner who will spend, and Parcells will get enough rope to be successful."

Resources are nothing without the power to use them, though, and it appears Parcells will have both. That represents a



The decks are cleared and the checkbook is open, and Parcells' success or failure will be his alone.

change even from his New York days, where general manager George Young was a powerful force. For the time being, at least, Kraft is willing to sign checks and let Parcells take charge, rather than dabble in areas that aren't his expertise. In short, he's no Jerry Jones.

"Kraft is very shrewd—he's involved in a lot of different businesses," Garber says. "He knows Parcells won two Super Bowls. And when you don't know the inner workings of the NFL it's makes sense to step back and let Parcells run the show. There's no George Young down the hall this time; Parcells will get the credit if they win. We'll find out if Parcells is a personnel genius. There's also no Lawrence Taylor—although Vincent Brown is a great player—but there's no player with a special set of rules. That magnifies Parcells' power even more.

"But the potential is there for Kraft to get smart real quick. He's put a lot of money into this, so Parcells has a year or two to pull the trigger. Kraft doesn't have the ego Jerry Jones does, though. I don't think God has the ego Jerry Jones does."

Parcells did, indeed, make sweeping

changes in his first year in New England. The '93 Patriots had 33 new players—18 of them rookies or first-year pros—and 14 new starters. Many of the new faces coming in have been familiar to Parcells, however. His coaching staff includes 10 former Giants, and his current roster includes ex-Giants such as Myron Guyton, Bob Kratch, John Washington, and Steve DeOssie.

One personnel move Parcells made came as no surprise to us: the offseason acquisition of running back Marion Butts from San Diego. For an I.S. article a couple of years ago in which he was asked which 10 players he would choose to build a team, Parcells tabbed Butts as one of his running backs, saying he would take Butts over Buffalo's Thurman Thomas. "Butts has a rare combination of speed and power, and I like power in a back," Parcells wrote. "When I'm building my own team, the more powerful guys I can get, the better off I'll be." True to his word, when Parcells got the chance to play out

the hypothetical exercise in reality, he swung a deal for Butts, who's a lot like Ottis Anderson, a sure-handed workhorse who was the featured back on Parcells' second Super Bowl team.

So Parcells has many of the pieces in place to build upon the Patriots' performance at the end of last season, when New England won its last four games after dropping 11 of its first 12. A strong finish at the end of the season is no guarantee of improvement the following year, however. Look at the Chargers and Colts, both of whom finished strongly in 1992—San Diego won its final seven regular-season games, Indianapolis its last five—but failed to make the postseason in 1993.

Will Parcells' charges suffer a similar setback this season? With him in control, don't bet on it. ■

Greg Barber

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FOR SALE: ONE BASEBALL. Price: \$5,000. No, Joe Carter didn't clobber this ball for his World Series-winning home run last year. Nor did Bill Mazaroski stroke it out for his Series winner in 1960. This was not even the ball Nolan Ryan hurled for his 5,000th strikeout.

What baseball could cost five G's? Would you believe the one Boston Red Sox rookie Rich Rowland smacked for a relatively insignificant 5th-inning four-bagger at Yankee Stadium on a Sunday afternoon in May? That was the asking price of the fan who caught Rowland's first big-league blast, which the Bosox naturally wanted to retrieve as a

memento for their young player.

That would seem an easy task; stadium security personnel track homers specifically to keep order and prevent brawls over the souvenirs. In addition, a fan who hauls in an important home run often is happy to exchange the ball for another one or, if he or she asks, for the autograph of the player who hit it or a chance to meet him. When Boston's Carlos Rodriguez hit his first major league dinger the day before Rowland's shot, the fan who caught it traded the ball for another baseball.

But the recipient of Rowland's homer was different—it was \$5,000 cash, or no deal. Kevin Shea, Boston's publicity manager, invited the man, his two children, and his brother to the press box. "His brother was translating," Shea says. "[The guy] didn't speak English. All he could say was '\$5,000.'"

Shea offered a ball signed by Mo Vaughn and a couple of others autographed by Red Sox ace Roger Clemens. "He wouldn't budge," Shea says of the home run hijacker. "I really don't know what his reasoning was." In the



These days career keepsakes often come with a hefty price tag.

end, it was no deal. Shea says Rowland was "a little bummed out." The PR man promised to get Rowland's 50th homer.

But if Rowland hits all 50 this season, he may have another hassle. Yankee Stadium opera-

tions director Tim Hassett says that when the Detroit Tigers' Cecil Fielder crushed his 50th homer in 1990 in New York, the fan who caught it "realized the importance of the ball and demanded money." When Fielder

Venues

Tradition Takes Yet Another Hit

AT BOSTON GARDEN, the home-court advantage is more than the intimidating fans hanging off their seats and the intimidating collection of championship banners hanging from the ceiling. A smaller-than-regulation hockey rink has helped cramp the offensive style of many a speedy Bruins opponent, and the lack of air conditioning in the arena has helped cramp the leg muscles of a few Celtics playoff foes on unbearably muggy May and June nights. The visitors locker room at "the Gah-den" is so small you'll think you're standing in the penalty box.

Now that Chicago Stadium has closed its doors, Boston Garden may be the last of the old-fashioned sports venues, the kind a visiting team enters knowing the playing field isn't quite level. That



special hometown edge is a prominent theme of the Boston Garden Tour, a 45-minute behind-the-scenes peek at the 65-year-old relic scheduled to close in September 1995. "People come here like they're on a mission," says Sam Gifford, director of Boston Garden Tours. "We've had people from Australia come because they'd seen the place on TV."

The tour begins with a film of the Garden's glorious history: images of everything from Marvin Hagler's left hook to Robert Parish's hook shot, from the election-eve rallies of FDR and JFK to the fourth-quarter rallies of Larry Bird and Kevin McHale. As for rink rats, there's Bobby Orr, and one of the arena's four-legged denizens, who is seen

scampering along the ice. Visitors learn about some of the Garden's more unusual occurrences, such as the time the circus left behind a monkey who literally swung from the rafters for two weeks before he was caught. Or the time during the NBA Finals when the Los Angeles Lakers demanded air conditioners in their locker room, then arrived before the game to find them—still packed in their cartons and sitting on the floor.

There will be no opportunity for such psychouts at the Garden's replacement, which is being constructed directly behind the current venue. Yes, the parquet floor and the banners will make the trip next door, but the new hockey rink will be regulation-sized, the locker rooms will be modern and roomy, and skyboxes will be everywhere. Shawmut Bank is contributing \$39 million

Unfriendly confines: Boston Garden is hell for opponents.

said no, that fan capitulated, taking an autographed bat instead.

In this age when every souvenir has its price, such cases are becoming increasingly common; once-simple transactions are turning into negotiations worthy of Barry Bonds' agent. "It's the deepest downside of the whole collectibles industry," says Chuck Pool, media relations director for the Florida Marlins. He fondly recalls his days working for the Houston Astros, when semimeaningful home runs—such as the one Buddy Bell, son of former big-leaguer Gus Bell, hit to tie Yogi and Dale Berra for the most father-son dingers—gladly were exchanged for another ball. "Today, it's instant commerce. 'I caught the ball, I can put my kid through college.' It kind of soils a neat little experience."

Perhaps fans are just taking a cue from the greed of the players themselves. Where autographs used to come free for the asking, now fans line up in droves to pay \$15 for a big-leaguer's signature—another former neat little experience that has developed into a cottage industry.

The recent expansion teams—

to the estimated \$160 million construction cost, so the arena will be called the Shawmut Center for at least 15 years.

Standing in an old visitors locker room with no lockers, just benches and wooden pegs on the wall, tour guide Mary Ann Hogan says: "When you hang a \$2,000 suit on a peg, it's a reality check. Twelve showers for 26 hockey players—it doesn't get much worse than this."

That depends on your perspective. Boston fans who have seen the Montreal Canadiens take a beating in the corners or watched the Lakers dissolve into puddles of sweat in June might think differently: Regulation rink? Cozy dressing rooms? Another sterile arena with a corporate name hanging over the door? It doesn't get much worse than that. —Jeff Ryan

with all their notable firsts—have been hit hardest. The action began in '92, when the Rockies organization played its first game, a Single-A affair in Bend, Ore. When Will Scalzitti cracked the first homer in franchise history, a couple of guys scaled a grocery store for it. "They knew what they had," says Rockies spokesman Mike Swanson. The fans worked the team over for free airline tickets to the Rockies' 1993 home opener, though they failed in their quest for hotel accommodations. "I made sure they sat nowhere near where the first home run could be hit," Swanson says.

It didn't help. According to Swanson, Eric Young, who hit the Rockies' first home roundtripper, "privately negotiated" for months with the fans who ended up with it. "Young now has the ball but will not say what he had to give up," Swanson says. He suspects it brought a substantial amount in tickets and equipment.

At least Young's home run counted. Pool says the man who rescued the first Marlins exhibition homer from a swampy puddle demanded \$100. When the Marlins agreed—and even added four Opening Day tickets—the fan upped the ante to \$500, and Pool walked away. He later read that the ball sold for \$1,000.

There still are some happy endings. Carter's clout was recovered for minor souvenirs, and the 16-year-old fan who caught Bo Jackson's memorable 1993 home run in his first at-bat after returning from hip-replacement surgery exchanged the ball for an autographed bat.

The first official Marlins homer, hit by Benito Santiago in Candlestick Park, was caught by Tony Leon, who was pressured into throwing it back, à la Wrigley Field's bleacher bums. "I blurted out in the press box, 'That guy just saved me \$5,000 in airfare,'" Pool says, figuring the price for prying the ball loose would be flying someone to a Marlins game. "The media ran out and started [asking the fan] 'Do you know what you just gave back?'"

No doubt feeling a bit guilty,

Pool called Leon, who asked to be allowed down to the field to meet Santiago and take some snapshots. Pool granted Leon's wish, and the two kept in touch. Leon's photos didn't come out, so on the next Marlins trip west, Pool invited him back down to the field.

Unlike some fans who find a historic homer heading their way, Leon was grateful and gracious. "He still sends us postcards, and he even sent us a salami for Christmas," Pool says. With no price tag attached. —Stuart Miller

Tribute

The Mother of All All-Star Games

IN AN ODD WAY, IT SEEMED like the traditional pregame atmosphere: Hordes of excited pen-and-paper-wielding fans besieging ballplayers for an autograph and a moment of intimate, albeit fleeting, conversation.

But these were not typical fans. Their expensive suits and receding hairlines betrayed their elite executive status, even as their awkward adulation harked back to the inno-

cent first-ever large-screen computer-simulated game using actual footage to pit baseball's 55 living Hall-of-Famers against one another, American League vs. National. The action took place at the second annual Hall of Fame dinner at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Twenty-seven Hall members—from (Luis) Aparicio to (Early) Wynn—attended the fund raiser, including 1994 inductees Steve Carlton and sentimental favorite Phil Rizzuto.

"Where's Rizzuto? I've got to find Rizzuto!" exclaimed Tom Seaver, searching for his erstwhile broadcast buddy. The former Yankees shortstop was surrounded in the pre-dinner crush, passing his drink to a fan to free his hands for an autograph as he chatted. "I can't even get a sip," Scooter roared. Unlike the fiercely private Carlton, though, Rizzuto reveled in the attention. "I still can't believe [I'm in]. It sure does feel different."

Then it was on to the main ballroom, where every effort was made to create the feel of an actual game. Yankees public address announcer Bob Sheppard and organist Eddie Layton introduced



The Hall of Fame dinner assembled Cooperstown's old and new, including [above] Brooks Robinson, Aparicio, Seaver, Rizzuto, and Palmer.



cence of youth. And these were not ordinary players: Jim Palmer was an underhand toss from Frank Robinson, who brushed by Bob Feller.

Clearly this was not an everyday ball game. No, this was the

the players, from the fit-looking Joe Morgan to the aging Bob Lemon. Melba Moore sang the Canadian and American national anthems. Waiters dressed as vendors served mediocre food.

The highlight of a ceremony

otherwise dominated by speeches as exciting as a rain delay—Elizabeth Dole on baseball? Who cares?—was the blessing by the Brooklyn Auxiliary Archbishop: “Oh Lord, we give thanks for open-air stadiums, real grass, and starters who finish.... Bless our Lord this Hall of heroes.”

Finally, it was time to play ball—in a manner of speaking. Hall officials had fed career stats for all 55 players into a computer, spliced game footage together to match the plays, and brought in the fabled Mel Allen for the call of the game.

There were cries of disbelief when Aparicio opened the game with a single off Sandy Koufax. The computer was roundly booed when Joe DiMaggio whiffed, but the scorn melted into laughter when the commercial break was a

spot for Butoni macaroni featuring a young Yankee Clipper as pitch man. (A later ad showed Reggie Jackson hyping Panasonic: “Only Panasonic plays as brilliantly as me.”)

Master of ceremonies Joe Garagiola then interviewed American League starter Bob Feller: “It’s your longest rest between starts—38 years,” Joe said. “Are you ready?”

Not entirely, as Feller yielded a homer to Willie Stargell. But Brooks Robinson robbed both Eddie Mathews and Johnny Bench of extra-base hits. (While the computer was on target at the hot corner, it overestimated Duke Snider’s range, having him run down about two balls per inning.)

The footage caused some laughs—Catfish Hunter and Gaylord Perry were seen in differ-

ent uniforms for every batter—and the game often proceeded at odds with the pace of baseball’s natural rhythm, since every pitch resulted in a hit or an out. Still, some of the players let their highly competitive natures show through. After giving up a two-run blast to DiMaggio, Carlton complained that he’d been “set up.” Seaver agreed that “the kids” were being picked on after he saw himself yield an RBI double to Ted Williams (who in his previous at-bat had cracked a 400-foot shot that was raced down by Willie Mays in his famous 1954 World Series catch of Vic Wertz’s blast). “I got some people out in my day,” Seaver protested to Garagiola.

The computer’s most unrealistic moment came when Mickey Mantle bunted in the late innings with his team down a run. But the

live action in the ballroom was even more incredible: Rizzuto watched the game intently for a full nine innings—though of course he treated the crowd to his inimitable humor. Scooter opined that after “that huckleberry” Palmer usurped his Money Store commercials, he figured he’d be asked to take Palmer’s place as Jockey underwear spokesman.

Then it was the bottom of the 9th, the NL at bat, trailing 4-3. One man on and two men out, and Rollie Fingers on to slam the door. Up steps pinch-hitter Hank Aaron. With the crowd cheering, Aaron hammers the game-winning home run—and how better to depict it than with footage of his record-breaking 715th? It’s hard to believe the computer picked it that way, but the fans went home happy.—S.M.

Games

The Sultans of the Street

QUICK QUIZ: ALPHONZO (Fonzo) Ferrara and Charlie (Horse) Ramirez are members of which hall of fame? Hint: Phil Rizzuto has been a member for three years. Stumped? It’s the Stickball Hall of Fame, which recently took up permanent residence at the Museum of the City of New York, in East Harlem.

The Hall is an informal group of 52 current and former stickball players voted in since 1980 by the Original Stickball Old

Timers, another informal group that sponsors stickball leagues and tournaments in New York City. Each inductee is commemorated with a small wooden plaque and receives the satisfaction of knowing that years of street-corner prowess didn’t go unnoticed. Until late September, the names, along with some interesting stickball artifacts, are on display at the museum, chronicling the history of an American game now a century old.

The Stickball Hall won’t have a vast collection of paraphernalia—true to its name, the game never has used much more than sticks and balls—but what’s there is authentic. There are sticks of various lengths, colors, and tapping patterns, made from pilfered

broomsticks or store-bought dowels. And there are the traditional “spaldeens”—flawed tennis ball centers that the Spalding ball manufacturing company began selling as stickballs to tap that market.

The majority of the exhibit is photographic. In one image from 1984, scruffy kids watch a batter take a big hack at a ball. Behind the players, a plume of water shoots from a fire hydrant. “The game shows how kids adapt to their environment,” says Rob Del Bagno, the museum’s exhibit designer.

Nevertheless, stickball is increasingly an older person’s pastime, carried on by men who grew up with it and can’t give it up. “In the next 10 years, the game will be gone,” says John Stephens, a 65-year-old New York banker, Hall member, and third baseman on the Original Old Timers team. “I say that as an Irishman and a pessimist. Nowadays, every kid can afford a basketball.”

Perhaps in hopes of postponing the game’s demise, Stephens has collected plenty of stories. There was William (Bouncer) Cruz, who met his maker when

he suffered a heart attack on the basepaths. “He was trying to stretch a double into a triple,” says Stephens. And then there was the time Joe DiMaggio pulled up in his limo to watch. The players offered him a turn at bat, but the Yankee Clipper declined. “I don’t have my sneakers on, in case I break a window,”

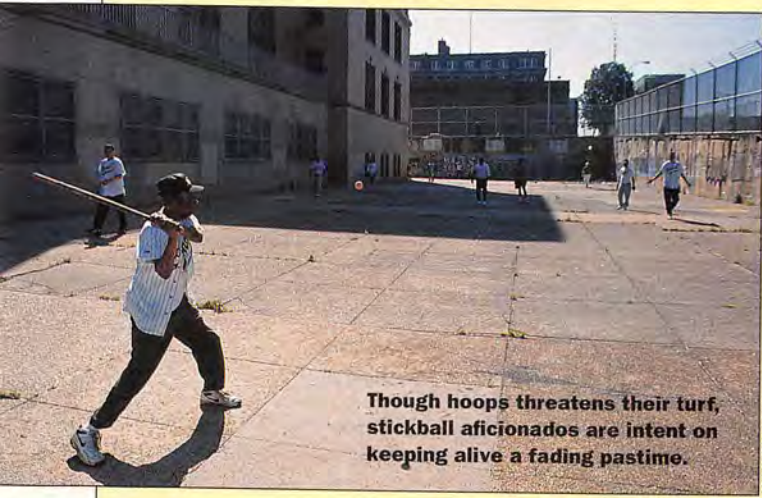


A mural by Robert Burghart in the exhibit captures the essence of the urban game.


Joe said, in complete understanding of the stickball code.

The Old Timers inducted Rizzuto, a Brooklyn native, into their hall three years ago—not only because he had played the game since he was young, but because they felt he was overdue for induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Rizzuto’s is the only truly famous name on the large plaque that will hang permanently in the museum, but the others’ are no less deserving.

—Noah Liberman



Though hoops threatens their turf, stickball aficionados are intent on keeping alive a fading pastime.



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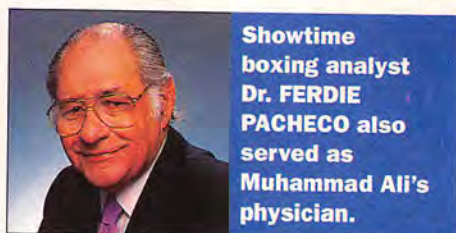
Should boxing have a mandatory retirement age?

Yes

THE MANDATORY RETIREMENT AGE for boxers probably should be 32, but I would settle for 35. If a boxer hasn't accomplished anything by the age of 35, he's probably not going to do so. There are exceptions—Jersey Joe Walcott, Archie Moore, Roberto Duran—but that's just what they are: exceptions.

The older a fighter gets, the more readily his brain sustains injuries—and it doesn't recover. If you break a bone it regenerates, but brain tissue doesn't. You put scars on the brain, and they stay there, and then later you have the punch-drunk syndrome. Guys who have been boxers reach the age of 50 or 60, and all of the sudden they can't remember anything, can't balance themselves, can't talk properly.

A lot of people refuse to believe their eyes when they're looking right at the evidence. Idiots ask me if Muhammad Ali's condition is related to boxing. Come on—listen to him talk, and then *you* tell *me* if it's related. Play a tape of Tommy Hearns talk-



Showtime boxing analyst Dr. FERDIE PACHECO also served as Muhammad Ali's physician.

ing 10 years ago, and then listen to him now. Luis Rodriguez was a magnificent welterweight champion in the '60s, but he got beat up in his last four or

five fights when he was past his prime. Today Luis doesn't recognize me, even though I worked every one of his fights and we were close friends for years.

I resent the fact that George Foreman opened the gates for all these old fighters to come back, and that he convinced much of America that you can compete at a championship level when you're in your 40s. Well, you can't. The parks of America are full of middle-aged men who have heart attacks trying to stretch a single into a triple while playing with much younger men. At that age, you should not be trying to compete with kids.

Foreman's comeback has been more like pro wrestling than boxing. He's beaten 24 frauds and has glamorized fast foods, the junk that's killing the American public. Larry Holmes isn't much better. Can you think of anything more foolish than Holmes still fighting? Does he have *any* skills left? It's one thing if he's destitute or his children are sick, but that's not the case. Should a guy with his bank account be out there just because his ego needs that little soothing stroke?

Lawyers always will argue that you can't stop a guy of any age from earning a living, that being able to go out there and get injured or killed is a matter of a fighter's own volition. However, if you see someone working a job that is going to harm him, wouldn't you feel compelled to get him out of it?

If I didn't love boxing I never would have been a part of it, because people trying to inflict pain on each other goes against so much of what a doctor believes in. It's because I do love boxers that I don't want to see them suffer horrifically in their final years. Medically, ethically, and morally, we have an obligation to try and save them from themselves. ■

No

A BOXER WHO IS IN GOOD SHAPE AND IS able to beat some of the top fighters in his weight class shouldn't have to quit just because he reaches a certain age. If we're *really* worried about safety, we should force some guys to retire at 25. Others shouldn't even be allowed in the ring from day one.

If you get hit a lot, yes, you'll get punch-drunk. However, just because you fight beyond a certain age doesn't mean it's guaranteed to happen. Not everybody gets run over by a car, but the guy who keeps crossing the street when the sign says DON'T WALK will get run over someday.

Muhammad Ali is in bad shape because he took too many punches in the gym during workouts. I know because I was there working for him from 1971 to 1975. I was one of the guys who used to bang on him while he just laid on the ropes during sparring. He took chances with his health by laying on those ropes. Those workouts were like crossing on the DON'T WALK sign.

If I was going to end up punch-drunk, I think I'd see some signs by now, but I'm 44 years old, and I still have my faculties. That's be-

cause I always had a good defense. Look at the films of me fighting Evander Holyfield and tell me how many hard punches he hit me with. Michael Moorer and Lennox Lewis probably have gotten hit more in the last year than I have in my whole career.

Older fighters are not all the same. Thomas Hearns shouldn't fight anymore because he wobbles every time you hit him. Iran Barkley shouldn't fight because he walks into every punch that's thrown at him. Maybe George Foreman should retire, too, because he comes into the ring fat and out of shape, gets hit a lot, and usually leaves with his face swollen.

There's nothing wrong with Roberto Duran fighting, though, no matter how old he is, because Duran still moves his head and gets out of the way of shots better than guys half his age. And my defense is still pretty good because my jab and my hand-eye coordination are sharp.

Fans still want to watch Duran, me, and other great fighters who earned the public's respect through the years. We fought everybody when we were champions. These guys who hold titles today duck people and don't face top contenders. There aren't enough new stars, so the fans demand the old ones.

My people will tell me if I'm doing something dangerous—I don't need an organization or an athletic commission to tell me. I prepare the right way and train hard. I'm not as good as I used to be, but I stay around because these two-bit champions can't fight, and I still have the ability to compete. I'm still better than a lot of the heavyweights out there today, and if the opportunity presents itself I can prove it.

Fighters shouldn't have to retire because their birth certificates say so. Every individual is different. ■

LARRY HOLMES was heavyweight champion from 1978 to '85 and currently has a 60-4 career record.



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By JEFFREY LYONS

A Child Shall Manage Them



THE LATEST BASEBALL movie in what has turned out to be a renaissance of the genre, "Little Big League" (Castle Rock Entertainment), puts a different spin on a familiar formula by asking its intended

preteen audience what it would be like to be a 12-year-old manager of a big-league team. The way the film answers that question should appeal not only to young viewers, but to their parents as well.

Luke Edwards plays Billy Heywood, who has the distinct advantage over every other child in Minneapolis of being the grandson of the Twins owner, portrayed by Jason Robards. Inevitably, Billy inherits the club from his grandfather and names himself manager.

No kid could ask for a better grandfather, or a better actor to play him; Robards, the Oscar, Emmy, and Tony winner (and fan of the old New York Giants), has an ease in front of the camera that is unmatched by most of his contemporaries. I only wish his role was a little more than a glorified cameo.

Baseball is a game of dreams, fulfilled and broken, and given the boy's bloodlines, he already has the count in his favor for fulfilling his. But what makes this an agreeable movie is that although the plot is far-fetched, rookie director Andrew Scheinman and the fine cast take the story seriously.

The youngster takes the helm while the

Grandpa knows best: Where there's a will, there's a 12-year-old manager.



team is in a losing streak, playing for a manager who carps and belittles rather than leads; veteran Chicago actor Dennis Farina, of TV's "Crime Story" and movies such as "Another Stakeout" and "Midnight Run," plays a manager who seems to have heeded Leo Durocher's adage about where nice guys finish. Ashley Crow is convincing in an underplayed portrayal of the boy's tolerant mother, a conveniently single parent who is the object of desire of Twins first

lates well to a screen. Add former major-leaguers such as ex-Cincinnati Red Brad (the Animal) Lesley and onetime Cub and Cardinal Leon (Bull) Durham as Twins players, and the movie has the look of the real thing. Even Ken Griffey Jr. makes an appearance.

John Ashton, one of the bumbling detectives who shadows Eddie Murphy in "Beverly Hills Cop," is pitching coach Mac McNally, who, once convinced of the boy's



Young Billy has to learn how to hold his own in meetings on the mound.

baseman Lou Collins, played by Timothy Busfield, whom you'll recognize from his co-starring role in "Field of Dreams" and TV's "thirtysomething." Busfield is a bit on the small side to play a first baseman, especially when you consider the bulk of Minnesota's actual first baseman, Kent Hrbek. The romance is laid-back and gradual, and certainly not the main thrust of this story.

Edwards is perfectly cast as reluctant hero, never gloating at his success when the team begins to win. This young actor, the star of the chilling NBC miniseries "I Know My First Name Is Steven" and an unfortunate participant in the alleged movie musical "Newsies," turns in a sensitive performance as a youngster determined to be a boy while handling a man's job.

The movie gets another boost from the field-level photography, which gives the viewer a good sense of the game. There's something about an indoor stadium such as the Twins' Metrodome that, while an anathema to purists—the venue has been compared to a giant garbage bag—trans-

knowledge of the game, is quick to lend support and advice in the dugout. And John Gordon, the real radio voice of the Twins, has the role of the narrator-announcer who moves the coverage of the game along. (Gordon, incidentally, once was so overcome with excitement after Hrbek hit a game-winning home run that he forgot the slugger's name and said simply, "Touch 'em all, Baseball Man." Unfortunately this bit wasn't used in the movie.)

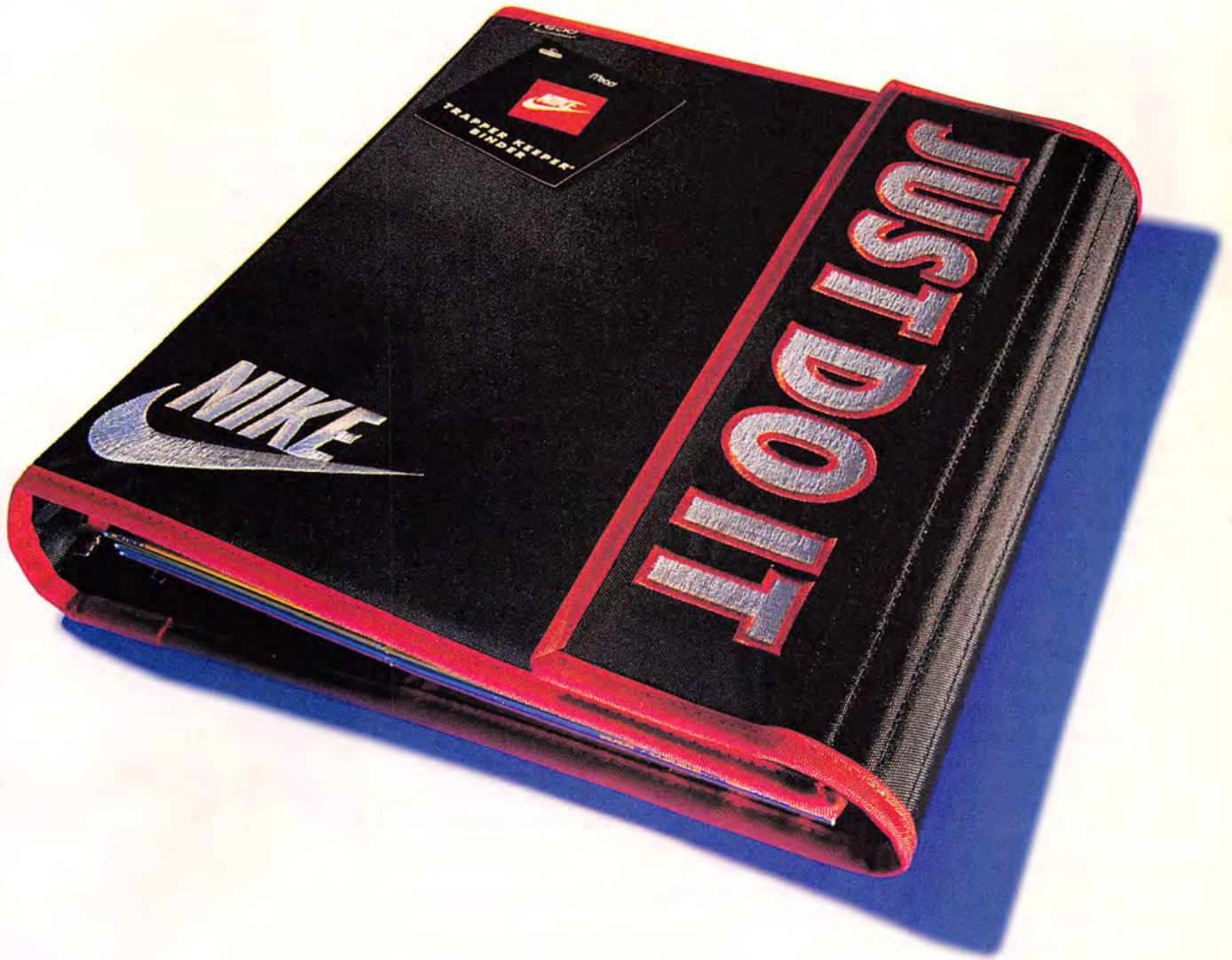
Now, of course a boy in school can't take the time to manage a big-league team for very long, and "Little Big League" resolves this predicament effectively. This is the sort of easy-to-like movie that makes few demands and, while it strains credulity just a bit, solidifies the baseball genre as one that reaffirms basic human values. ■


Rating on a scale of 1 to 4 baseballs:



Movie critic JEFFREY LYONS' reflections on sports and films appear every month.

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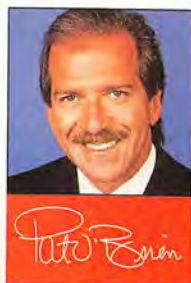


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By PAT O'BRIEN

Another Season With the Mick



IT'S WINDY AND about to rain in Dallas, but here we are on the fifth hole trying to avoid some water. I'm playing golf with Mickey Mantle. Actually, he's playing golf, and I'm hitting the ball all over the place.

They say you can learn a lot about a man by playing golf with him, and today we are learning a couple of new things about the Mick.

"I never used to be able to tee the ball up, my hands used to shake so much from the drinking," he says. "And I swear to God, now I can actually walk the course. I could never do that. And when I go back to the clubhouse, I'm sober and I order a Diet Coke. I never did that before either."

Mantle is doing a lot of things for the first time these days. One of the things he's doing is getting to know a few people all over again. He has many old friends to catch up with, and a whole lot of new ones. "You should see the letters from people who are trying to break the bottle," he says. "It's just unbelievable. This sobriety is great. I mean, people think it's hard to do, but Pat, I really don't have the urge. I thought I'd have it on the plane back from the Betty Ford Center. But I didn't and haven't yet, and I'm not about to. I looked at some pictures of me from a year ago. My face was all bloated, and my eyes were red. No, I wouldn't trade this for anything."

On the other hand, Mickey wouldn't trade the good times either—and there were a lot of them. Now, as an elder legend of baseball, he sits back and reflects on a career of hard living, hard playing, hard drinking. Now that he's sober, it seems like the memories come a little quicker, a little sharper. Like he's reading the back of that baseball card Bob Costas carries with him.

And the great thing about it is that most all of us carry a little of Mickey Mantle with us. In fact, those of us who consider ourselves baby boomers figure we kind of own the Mick. After all, how many of us stood at the plate in the sandlot or on the

street or at the playground with the mythical public address announcer proclaiming, "No. 7 is now at bat. Center fielder... Mickey Mantle."

"You know, honestly," he tells me as we approach the sand trap where my golf ball is buried, "I didn't know that was going on while I was playing. And then when I retired in 1969, it was like I was dead for a while. At least until 1975. But when this whole memorabilia thing kicked in, I started to realize people were taking notice. And it's because guys like you now are speaking out. The other day, a guy walks up to me. He's got these big tears in his eyes, and he says, 'Mick, I've been waiting 30 years to shake your hand.' He's got his kid with him, and he says, 'Son, this is the greatest ballplayer who ever lived.' And the kid says, 'Dad, this is an old man.'"

Mantle has a million stories he likes to tell to adoring audiences, and these days adoring audiences can't get enough of him. "The first time I saw Stan Musial, my dad took me to a game in Joplin, Mo., and said, 'Son, try and be like him.' I always wanted to be Stan Musial.

"My first year with the Yankees in 1951 was Joe DiMaggio's last, and Whitey Ford and I figured Joe hit at least 25 balls out on that left-center track in front of the 457-foot sign. Now, those balls were all caught. That would have been an extra 25 home runs that year." What a picture that is: Mickey and Whitey, wet behind the ears, sitting in the dugout, marveling at Joe DiMaggio.

Mickey marveled at a couple of others as well:

"Ted Williams was the greatest hitter I ever saw."

"Roger Maris breaking Ruth's record was the greatest thing I've ever seen in sports."

"Can you imagine Lou Gehrig playing in 2,130 consecutive games? He must not have drank at all."

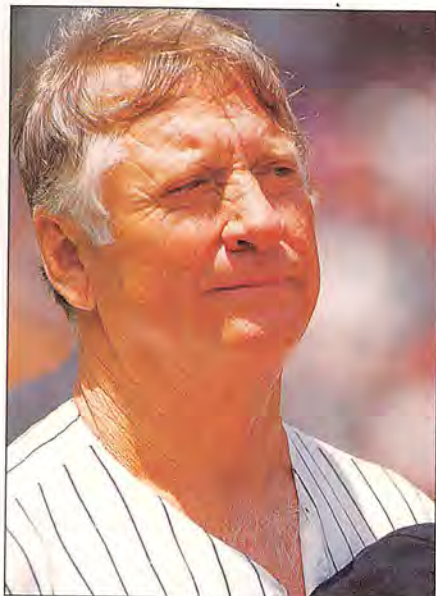
"Billy Martin is the only person who could *hear* someone give him the finger."

And there's the story about his first injury, the one that tore up his right knee: "It was in the second game of the 1951 World Series. Willie Mays hits a pop fly into right center. I'm running as fast as I can, and I hear Joe say, 'I got it.' Well, you don't want to run into Joe DiMaggio. I stopped, and my back cleat stuck in one of those rubber drains, and down I went."

But he went on to be, well, Mickey

Mantle. And now, sober, he's enjoying another season in his life: seeing old friends, playing golf, signing autographs. "I was back in Oklahoma and stopped at one of those convenience stores to get a soda. A couple of Okies with their uniforms and a couple of beers came up to me and said, 'Hey, Mickey Mantle! Great to have you back in Oklahoma. Listen, we got a softball game goin' on down the road. Wanna come and play? It's slow-pitch.' I laughed and said, 'If I could hit and run, I'd be making \$10 million dollars a year now.'"

He even watches a few games now and then. (When Ken Griffey Jr. broke his record for homers in the first two months of a season, Mick merely said, "Let's see where he is at the *end* of the season.") Mantle's new book, "All My Octobers," has enough memories for any baseball fan, or Mantle fan—and as I think about that title,



STEVE CRANDALL/NEW YORK YANKEES

"This sobriety is great," says Mantle. "I wouldn't trade it for anything."

I realize, again, that this guy was the original Mr. October.

Now that he's free of the bottle, one day doesn't run into the next for Mantle. They come one at a time, and each one is great. "I seem to be more popular now than when I was playing," he says. "For some reason or other, Mickey Mantle is back."

Actually Mickey, you never really went away. And you never will. ■

PAT O'BRIEN's insightful profiles of sports personalities appear monthly.

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By BOB RUBIN

A Wobbly Walk on the Wire

BACK WHEN I WAS young and ignorant—make that younger and more ignorant—I used to criticize television sportscasters for mispronouncing a name or getting a pitch count wrong or citing the wrong yard line. I demanded perfection.

In time, though, as I got to know more about the profession, I began to cut my subjects some slack. I learned to critique on matters of substance rather than on minutiae. However, it wasn't until I found myself on the other side of the camera on a regular basis that I gained a true appreciation of how difficult the job actually is.

It was like the first time you see major league pitching live and close up. Watching the majors on TV as a high school player, I



affiliate in Miami. For five years he worked as an analyst for SportsChannel on University of Miami football and basketball games.

Zagacki works full-time in sports radio and TV. He's program director for South Florida all-sports radio station WQAM, co-hosts a talk show on that station with another former Dolphins receiver, Jimmy Cefalo, and hosts Miami Heat and Florida Marlins pregame shows for Channel 33. He also has done radio analysis for University of Miami football, basketball, and baseball games.

The point is, both of my colleagues are veteran pros behind the mike and the

thought, "Aw, hell, I can hit that." Then came the day I stood behind the catcher in spring training as the big-leaguers warmed up. The pop of the mitt was like the crack of rifle fire, and I flinched with every pitch. *Oh, my. Wait a minute.*

I had a few "wait a minute" experiences as a fledgling television personality, too. My TV gig is a weekly show called "Sunday Night Sports Rap," an hour-long live program that airs on Channel 33, an independent station in Miami, and in four other markets in South and Central Florida. At the risk of sounding self-serving, it's a very good show, especially when you consider everyone involved in it has a full-time job doing something else. I do a commentary on a subject of my choosing

Hosting a TV talk show is a high-wire act that balances self-confidence and sports acumen against the sheer terror of knowing that every mistake is magnified a thousand times.

that's taped just before the show goes on the air, and I also participate in a live segment called "Time Out," which consists of a three-man round-table discussion of the week's most topical events, regional or national.

My colleagues on "Time Out" are the show's co-hosts and founders, Jim Mandich and Joe Zagacki. Mandich, a former Miami Dolphins and Pittsburgh Steelers tight end, is an executive in a construction company but also does extensive work on TV and radio in South Florida, including analysis on Dolphins radio broadcasts, a radio sports talk show, and sports commentaries for the ABC

camera. I am not. I had some radio experience, having briefly co-hosted a sports talk show, but had appeared on TV only infrequently and always in the relatively easy role of interviewee. As such, I made several guest appearances on "Sports Rap." I enjoyed the experience, the people involved, and the atmosphere—it presented an opportunity to be creative in a different medium, and that intrigued me. I inquired about becoming a regular and did so two summers ago.

My role evolved as the show did. "Sports Rap" went from a news and information format, heavily reliant on guests, to one based on analysis, opinion, commentary, and debate. We look at upcoming or recent significant events of the week—locally and nationally—and try to put them into perspective. Accordingly, I went from helping to conduct interviews

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to offering commentary and opinion and engaging in debates. And though I'd long done that sort of work as a newspaper columnist, I learned TV was a different animal altogether.

At first I'd write out, memorize, and deliver my commentaries live—nerve-racking work, like doing a high-wire act without a safety net. All day Sunday, as show time approached, I walked around reciting, growing increasingly apprehensive. I imagined myself forgetting my place and staring in silent, mortified horror at the camera. My heart pounding, I'd wonder if this was the night I embarrassed myself forever.

Sure, enough, one night it happened. In rehearsal, just before going on the air, I developed brain lock. Right in the middle of ripping George Steinbrenner, I lost my place and drew a total blank. As everyone on the set stared at me, I couldn't even remember my own name—and I was going live in less than five minutes.

Remember the scene in "Broadcast News" when ace reporter Albert Brooks finally fulfills his dream to serve as anchor but starts to pour perspiration the minute he sits in the chair? Comics who bomb call it "flop sweat." Well, even though the studio was at its usual meat-locker temperature, I began to understand the meaning of the term.

Trying to be helpful, Mandich and Zagacki suggested I cut my commentary short—but the thought of changing anything at that point only made me sweat more. I ran out of the studio, found a secluded spot, forced myself to calm down, and began to recite my piece to myself again.

I returned to the studio and sat down just seconds before I was to go on, and I will never forget the feeling of apprehension—no, pure fright—as I got the count-down from five. I was thinking, "I'm about to make a fool of myself all over the state," but somehow I pulled it off. We immediately went to a commercial break, and everyone on the set applauded, but I vowed never again. I needed a safety net.

The show's budget doesn't permit a TelePrompTer, so now I make my own cue cards. Members of the crew hold them up just below the lens of the camera so I can read without appearing to be reading. It was also agreed I could tape the commentary before the show went on; now if I screw up, I can do it over. It's a comfort, like the "delete" key on my computer.

Even with the cue cards and tape, there were gaffes. After I number the cards, one of the cameramen tapes them together so they can be unrolled in proper

sequence as I read. Of course, when I least expected it—I was cruising jauntily along, heading for a boffo finish—I fell off a cliff. Wrapping it up, I intoned, "So Dan Marino must decide if he..." and stopped. If he what? I had no idea. I had left the last cue card in my car.

Did I take grief over that one from the crew? Bet on it.

Another time I was in the middle of a piece when I found myself saying something completely nonsensical: "The baseball owners it's a great game and..." John, a staffer, had taped the cue cards in the wrong sequence.

Did John get ragged royally over that one? Believe it.

He's emotional, bombastic. His nickname is "Mad Dog," and it fits him well.

For example, I think Bobby Knight is a bully and a tyrant whose antics are a disgrace. Jim thinks Knight is a great leader of men being hounded by us pencil-necked geeks of the press.

For all our differences, though, Jim and I have developed a respect and affection for one another. We don't take our subjects or ourselves all that seriously, and behind the Mad Dog exterior lurks a man of intelligence and—though Jim probably would deny it indignantly—sensitivity.

However, with Zagacki serving as the voice of reason and referee, we go at it vigorously on the air. Sometimes Zagacki

Right in the middle of ripping George Steinbrenner, I lost my place and drew a total blank. As everyone on the set stared at me, I couldn't even remember my own name. Even though the studio was as cold as a meat locker, I began to sweat.

The mechanics of delivery weren't the only adjustment, either. The commentary is not to go longer than two minutes, which translates to about 400 words max—about six or seven paragraphs. Some writers have just cleared their throats by then, but I had to learn to self-edit ruthlessly: Get to the point quickly. Find a way to say it more simply and more directly. Chop those complex, compound sentences down into more comprehensible units. And if it's hard to say, it's also probably hard to read.

Still, at least I have control of the commentary segment. I have no control or safety net on the "Time Out" segment, which often consists of Mandich and me going at each other with Zagacki acting as moderator—or perhaps ringmaster is more accurate.

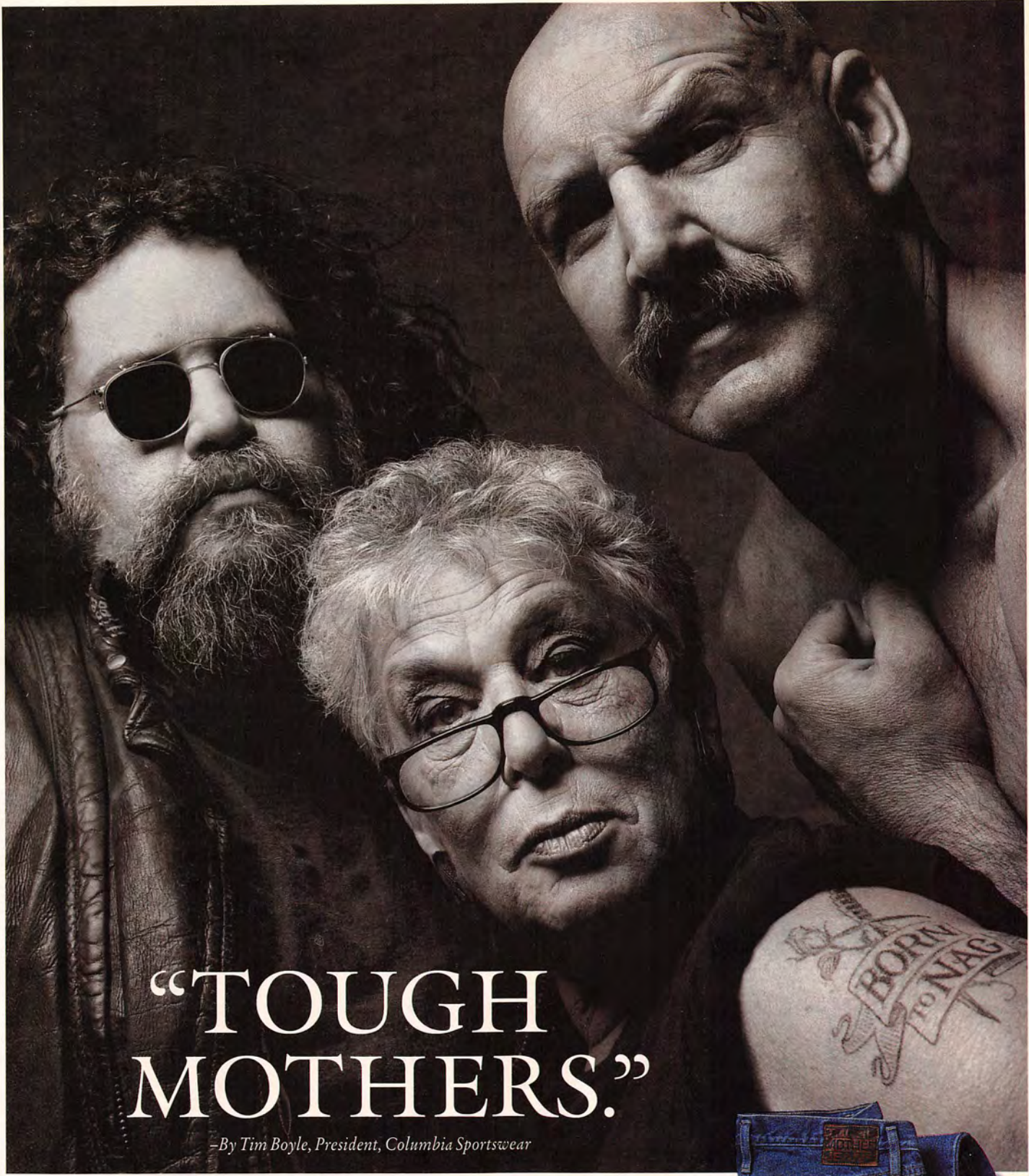
It's easy for Mandich and me to duke it out verbally because we've got very different outlooks on sports and life. I'm a dyed-in-the-wool liberal, your classic bleeding heart, sympathetic to women and minorities, sensitive to feelings, opposed to violence, cerebral in my approach. Jim's a hard-core right winger, an unabashed sexist who seems to think most problems can be solved with a punch in the mouth.

abandons his role as middleman and jumps in on one side or the other, and we get a double-team going. We've been told it can be quite entertaining; at the very least, we have a heck of a lot of fun.

But it's also frustrating. I always think of these absolutely devastating retorts, lines that would simply leave Mandich speechless and bleeding in the prone position. The problem is, I think of them right after the segment is over.

In my youth, I worshipped a girl from afar. She was in a class of mine in high school, and for nearly a year we exchanged not a word. Finally, one day she spoke to me—said hello and casually mentioned that we knew someone in common. I replied, "Ah...um...uh..." As soon as she walked away I thought of a million suave and debonair things to say that would have made her fall instantly and hopelessly in love with me. Then I calmly considered how I would kill myself.

Now I often come up with my best stuff in the car on the way home from the studio. However, though I pound my forehead, I don't contemplate suicide. I had only one shot at the girl of my dreams, but I'll get another shot at Mandich next Sunday night. ■



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INSIDE INTERVIEW

STEVE YOUNG'S PRO CAREER has been full of highs and lows, twists and turns. After setting an NCAA record with a .713 completion percentage in his senior year at Brigham Young, Young didn't sign with an NFL team, instead allowing his attorney, Leigh Steinberg, to negotiate a \$40 million contract with the Los Angeles Express of the USFL.

After two crazy seasons with the Express, Young bought his way out of his contract to sign with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, who had selected him in a supplemental draft after the '84 season. Young struggled with the hapless Bucs—but then-San Francisco 49ers coach Bill Walsh saw his potential and traded second- and fourth-round draft picks for Young in 1987.

Young's performance for the 49ers has been extraordinary. Only 13 quarterbacks in NFL history have exceeded a 100 single-season passer rating in the league's rating system, which weighs percentage, average gain per pass, interceptions, and touchdowns; beginning in 1991, Young has surpassed the century mark in each of his three years as a starter, making him the only quarterback ever to notch three consecutive 100-plus seasons. In two of the past three seasons he has taken the 49ers to the NFC Championship Game. He was the league's MVP in 1992. He has set club records with 4,023 passing yards in a season and 183 straight passes without an

interception, and twice has thrown for more than 400 yards in a game.

Passing is only one of his skills, though. He's one of the best running quarterbacks in the history of the league, with speed and elusiveness that have carried him to a 6.3 yards-per-carry average in his pro career. Many fans—both in the Bay Area and beyond—never will forget his 49-yard game-winning touchdown run against the Minnesota Vikings in 1988.

His interests also extend far beyond football. Young has earned his law degree from BYU—he's a great-great-great-grandson of Brigham Young, by the way—by completing one semester a year in the offseason for six years. He's long been involved in charity work, and last year he established the Forever Young Foundation, which funds many charities, primarily those oriented toward youth activities.

Yet, for all this, he has had a hard time earning the respect and love of 49ers fans. Why? Simply because he replaced the legendary Joe Montana, who led the 49ers to four Super Bowl titles.

Young's career has been intertwined with Montana's since the lefthander joined the 49ers in 1987. At the time Walsh thought Montana, who had had back surgery the previous season, wouldn't be able to play much longer; Young was insurance for the time when Montana's body forced him to retire. Montana won the NFL passing title in 1987—but when he played

STEVE HATHAWAY

Steve Young:

LIFE *in the* GLASS

HOU

*When you unseat a living legend
you expect to be noticed, but the 49ers
quarterback has withstood intense
scrutiny to create his own legacy*

By GLENN DICKEY

USE

poorly in a playoff game against the Vikings, Walsh put in Young in the third quarter; Young played well, but the 49ers lost the game.

The next season Montana was bothered by back and health problems, and struggled early. However, he came back to play brilliantly, and Young slipped back into the shadows until Montana broke his hand in the final quarter of the NFC Championship Game following the 1990 season. Further injuries caused Joe to miss all of the 1991 season and all but one half of the meaningless final game of '92. Yet, many 49ers fans felt Montana should be the starter in '93; they were enraged by his trade to the Kansas City Chiefs before that season, and they took out much of their ire on Young.

Young began to win over some fans when he played despite an injured thumb on his throwing hand in the early part of last season, while Montana often was sidelined by injuries for Kansas City. However, when the 49ers lost again in the NFC Championship Game, primarily because of a porous defense, Young again was accused of not being able to win the big game.

INSIDE SPORTS: How does it feel to follow a legend?

STEVE YOUNG: It's been tough. I didn't blame fans for being disappointed that Joe was gone—he was a great quarterback—but I'd seen the other side of that, too. When I came here in '87 and played well at the end of the season, and then replaced Joe in the playoff game against Minnesota, there was talk that he'd be traded, and some of the same fans who were unhappy when he finally left were the ones who were calling for his trade then. I thought that was crazy, because he'd already won a couple of Super Bowls.

I can handle the fans' reaction now, though, because I'm playing. The hardest thing for me, really, was sitting on the bench. I was not a good backup quarterback, because I always wanted to play. Some guys can be happy in that role, and that's no reflection on them, but it just wasn't for me.

IS: Did you ever think of trying to go to another team because you weren't playing?

SY: There were times when I thought it

would be better if I left here because I was so frustrated. We went around and around about that a lot, with Leigh Steinberg, myself, and [team president] Carmen Policy. But in the end, I don't think I had any control in the matter. If the 49ers wanted to trade me, they'd trade me; if they wanted me to stay, I was going to stay.

Now I can look back and see that I really had the best situation. I was in the best system, I had the best coach in Bill Walsh, I could learn from watching Joe, and now I have the chance to do what I can do with

up and say you're a leader. People have to *decide* to follow you—that's what makes you a leader. It wasn't easy here, because I was following one of the great field leaders of all time.

I felt I just had to go out there and do the best I could, and eventually they'd come to accept me. I always did that, whatever my role. When I was backing up, if I had 10 plays to run or the last half of the last quarter of an exhibition game, I just tried to do as much as I could in that time. If I had some time in practice, I tried to do as much as I could.

IS: Some people thought you tried to do too much, that you were too hyper. Did you ever feel that?

SY: When you have limited time like that, there's always the possibility that you'll get too nervous to be effective, and maybe that happened to me sometimes. But my emphasis was always on playing well. I didn't want to come out of the game and have to say, "Well, I could have done better, but I didn't."

IS: Now that you've earned your law degree, are you ready to hang out your lawyer's shingle and retire from football?

SY: Not at all. I don't even know why I went for a law degree, or what I'll do now that I've got it. I'm certainly not going to join a big law firm. That would be too restricting. When I first started [law school], though, it was a real help to me. I was so frustrated because I wasn't playing, and it helped take my mind off my frustrations.

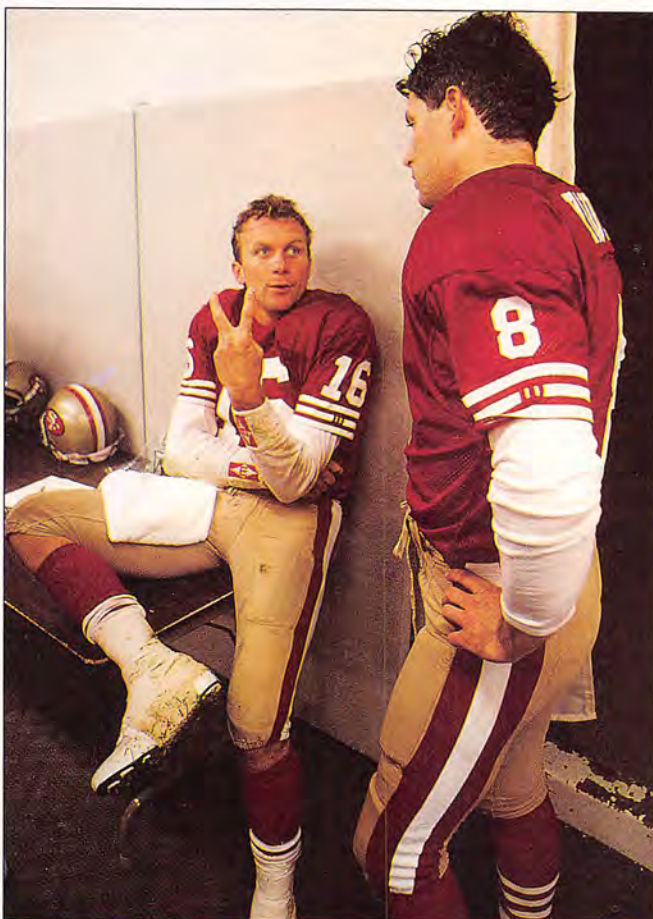
I certainly have no intention of quitting football. Football has been an important part of my education. It's taught me a lot of things: how to deal with other people, how to be patient in what I'm doing, how to adjust to the money I get. Most people would think, what's there to

adjust to—just take it. But athletes have the reputation of not doing a very good job with money. That's something we talk about a lot in the locker room.

IS: You have the reputation of having a rather frugal lifestyle.

SY: I don't think my lifestyle is unusual. I think of myself as being normal, whatever that is.

IS: Still, athletes are notorious for going



"Looking back, I see I had the best situation. I had the best coach in Bill Walsh, and I could learn from Joe."

great talent around me. Plus, I've loved being in the Bay Area.

I think the fans are starting to appreciate what I'm doing. I'd like to think that in the past few years they've been able to come out and know something exciting was going to happen at Candlestick.

IS: What about your teammates? Have they accepted you as the team leader?

SY: It's taken some time. You don't just step

out, for instance, and buying the fastest, most ostentatious car they can find. What do you drive?

SY: A Jeep. I couldn't go out and get a Ferrari because I'd kill myself. There's no way I could get in that car and not go 200 miles an hour. I'd probably drive it off the edge of the bridge, into the Bay. Some

could have been fun. I could have handled that, I think. But a running back? I don't think so. I'm running in special situations, which is a lot different than running specific plays from scrimmage. When I played running back in the USFL with the Los Angeles Express, that was because we were running out of players. We were

dressing only 24 players.

IS: Do you ever regret starting your pro career in the USFL?

SY: No, because it got me here eventually. At the time, yes, I was disappointed that I wasn't in the

NFL, and it was a crazy time. But I had some great experiences, and in my career I've had some great coaches, from Sid Gillman to Bill Walsh. I certainly have no regrets about that.

IS: You've been criticized for running too much. How do you feel about that?

SY: Each year I've been a starter, my running stats have gone down. It's not that I'm conscious of running less, but I'm looking more at the other side of it. I'm telling myself, keep looking for that fifth receiver, that extra way of throwing the ball.

I've said many times that I don't want the play to end with the ball in my hand if I can avoid it. When I come to the line of scrimmage knowing I've got Jerry Rice, John Taylor, Ricky Watters, and Brent Jones, I

just think we have too many weapons for me to be running the ball very often. Plus, there's a big difference between me running for 10 yards or dumping the ball off. Even if the pass gets only seven yards, it involves somebody else in the offense, and players come back to the huddle thinking they may get the ball this time.

IS: Have your teammates ever complained when you've run with the ball instead of passing it?

SY: Yeah. The guys we've got always think they're going to be open, and they want the ball. Brent Jones hasn't been covered on any play in his life—in his mind. I'm sure Jerry basically feels the same way. But you like to have guys like that, guys who want the ball. I was talking to an NFL quarterback the other day who said, "You're lucky. I've got five guys who don't want the ball. They all leave the huddle hoping I won't throw to them."

IS: How have you improved since you came to the 49ers?

SY: When I first came here, I didn't have the luxury of patience. It was just like Tampa Bay—Steve Young was supposed to come in and do some wild and crazy things, running all over the field, and get it done somehow.

I've since learned to manage the game much better, to think in terms of the whole game and not just this series. I've learned to see the whole field, so now I can go to that fifth receiver. I just feel more confident, and I think my accuracy has improved because of that. I've also learned to



STEVE WOLTMANN

"Shanahan can drive you crazy, but he has a knack for thinking like a defensive coach."

parts of my personality aren't too stable.

IS: That kind of risk-taking shows on the field but not much in your interviews. When Montana was with the 49ers, you were very cautious when you were interviewed. Are you more relaxed with the media now?

SY: That was my personality, too—I'm not one to shout out all my frustrations to the world—but yes, it's easier dealing with the media now. I kind of enjoy the craziness of it all.

IS: What have you learned about being a quarterback?

SY: You have to be part psychologist to play quarterback. You have to really get to know your teammates, to know what they can do. That's why I've liked these international trips [for preseason games] we've taken, because the wives and girlfriends come along, and you see a different side of your teammates than you see on the practice field.

IS: Another way you've gotten to know your teammates is by inviting them over for home-cooked meals. How did that start?

SY: Harris Barton and I decided we didn't want to go out all the time, so we hired a woman to cook for us. She came from a large family and was used to cooking a lot, so we'd have what seemed like leftovers for 30. So we decided to invite groups of our teammates to join us—the defensive backs one time, offensive linemen another. It's been fun. We've had a chance to get to know each other better, plus it's great food.

IS: Getting back to the football field—you've made some great runs as a quarterback and even played running back briefly in the USFL. Do you think you could have been a running back, or a tailback in the single wing?

SY: A single wing tailback? Yeah, that



STEVE WOLTMANN

"Each year I'm running less—I always say I don't want the play to end with the ball in my hand."

have more patience. It all comes together.

IS: Do you set personal goals for a season?

SY: I learned a long time ago that the personal goals don't work. I used to do that in college—thinking I had to average 250 passing yards a game, for instance—but I've gone away from that with the 49ers.

If you set personal goals, you wind up on the sidelines thinking, "I've got to get 50 yards in the last quarter," and that may not be at all what the team needs. It's different in baseball—if a baseball player does well individually, it's usually going to help the team. In football it's just the reverse: If the team is doing well, your individual statistics are going to be good. Sure, I like to have a high quarterback rating because that's an important measure of how well you're playing, but I know that if the team is winning my rating will be high, so I don't have to worry about it.

IS: So, how do you look at a game or a season?

SY: I've found that the best way to do it is to say that your goal is the Super Bowl. To get to the Super Bowl you have to play well, so that part takes care of itself. That doesn't mean I don't have high standards, but those standards are more for reaching the team goal of the Super Bowl.

IS: Speaking of the Super Bowl, what do you think your chances are this season?

SY: We've got a real shot. We had our best draft in three or four years. We especially improved on defense—this time we went after players who not only have a lot of physical ability but love to play the game. Everything I hear about Bryant Young [San Francisco's top pick, a defensive lineman out of Notre Dame] is that he's just like Dana Stubblefield: He plays hard every down.

And getting Ken Norton and Gary Plummer as free agents should be a real plus. They remind me of guys like Hacksaw Reynolds and Dan Bunz: They just love to go out there and butt heads with guys. We need that kind of intensity on defense.

IS: You've lost in the NFC Championship Game in two of the past three years. Has that frustrated you?

SY: It's been brutal. I've gone over and over those games in my mind, but there's nothing I can do to change them. I try to look at it in a positive way: This is the one goal I haven't reached, so it's still a challenge.

IS: How do you feel about Walsh's offensive system?

SY: This offense gives you so much. You know coming to the line of scrimmage that if you can't get the ball through over here, you just go over there. In a lot of NFL offenses, the quarterback just goes back

helped me. But Mike Shanahan has been very good for me, and for the team.

When Shanahan came in there was the question of how he was going to work his ideas into the Bill Walsh system, which we'd been running for so long. So Mike took all the game films home and studied them, and he came up with some ideas about how we could make minor changes—maybe changing the progression of receivers on this play or that—that improved the offense.

It really helped to have somebody take a fresh look at the offense. We couldn't have done that, because we were used to running it a certain way, but Mike had just a slightly different approach. You can see it in the stats; I think we've led the league in offense the last two or three years. And you can see it in specific games. We'd played New Orleans so much that the Saints had a good idea what we were going to do—we could still make yardage, but it was tough. Mike came in with a slightly different approach, and just that little difference has made us much more effective against the Saints.

IS: How has Shanahan helped you?

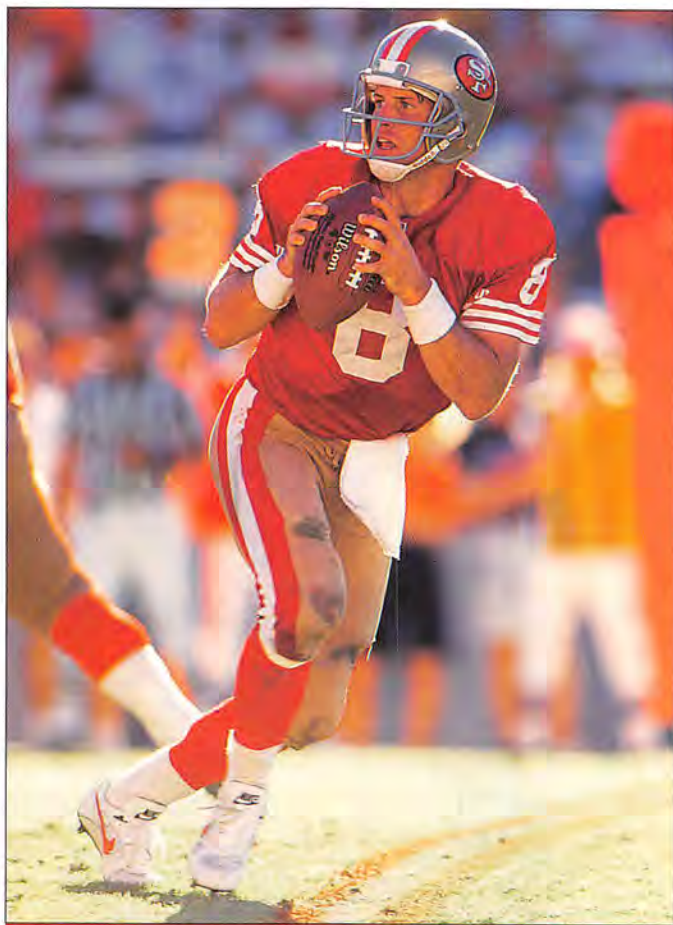
SY: Mike is such a detail man. He can drive you crazy—his nickname on the team is, "Let's do that just one more time"; he says it all the time—but he's helped me because he's made me look more at the mental approach. I always just want to go out there and do it on the field, but he's made me see that if I look at the films just a little longer, I can learn something that will help me on the field.

He really has a knack for thinking like a defensive coach. He'll take game films home on Monday, and then on

Tuesday he'll come to me and say, "This is what the defensive coordinator is going to try to do, and this is what we can do." When he says that, I know he was right the week before, so I'm sure he's going to be right this time, too.

IS: Speaking of Walsh's system, what's your relationship with Walsh these days?

SY: We talk two or three times a season. He'll say, "I saw you on TV last week, and you threw a pass in the second quarter..."



"You don't just step up and say you're a leader. People have to decide to follow you—that's what makes you a leader."

and holds the ball, hoping a receiver will get open, and a lot of the time he gets sacked. In the NFL today, when a quarterback gets sacked because he's holding the ball, it's just too demoralizing for the team.

IS: You work most closely with offensive coordinator Mike Shanahan. What's your relationship with him?

SY: When [former offensive coordinator] Mike Holmgren left, it was hard for me. I'd been close to Mike, and he had really

TOM DIPACE

because that's the way he is. He's always thinking football.

The talk I remember, though, was in 1991, when things weren't going so well—publicly, anyway. Privately I felt I was doing a good job, and I knew the coaches thought so too, but there was a tremendous amount of criticism from the media and fans. Bill said, "You shouldn't have to take all this criticism because what's happening isn't all your fault. If you want to take it, fine, because people are certainly willing to let you do that, but it's really too much to be putting everything on your shoulders." That was a tremendous help to me.

IS: Off the field, you've been a very private person, but you've been involved in quite a bit of charity work. Now you've got your own foundation. Tell us about that.

SY: I started the Forever Young Foundation because I felt I was spending a lot of time and effort doing individual charities, and a lot of that was wasted. This way I could concentrate on one foundation, and we could probably be more effective. We concentrate on small charities, especially ones related to youth, where we can make a difference. The American Cancer Foundation is a fine charity, but it already has ways it can raise money. Small groups have trouble doing that.

One of the advantages I have as a pro athlete is that I have great name recognition, so that's one way I can really help. That won't always be true—when I'm 50, that name recognition won't be there, so I have to do it now. We do things throughout Northern California and Utah. For instance, this spring a guy came to me for a golf tournament in Fresno. He did all the work on it, so I said the money raised should go back to groups in Fresno, because that's where it came from.

I'll work with groups in the offseason, but I don't do anything much during the season. That's my profession, and I owe it to the 49ers and the fans to give it my whole-hearted effort.

IS: The expression "forever young" can be taken in another way, too. If you aren't going to quit soon to go into the law profession, how much longer do you think you can play?

SY: I'll play as long as I feel I can do the job. My body is in good shape, because I was well-rested for that time [as a backup]. I haven't had a lot of injuries. Really, I feel as good as I felt when I was a rookie. ■

As a longtime columnist for The San Francisco Chronicle, contributing writer GLENN DICKEY is a veteran observer of the Bay Area sports scene.



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Predicted Order of Finish

Playoff teams in *italics*

NFC EAST

1. *Cardinals*
2. *Cowboys*
3. *Giants*
4. *Redskins*
5. *Eagles*

NFC CENTRAL

1. *Packers*
2. *Bears*
3. *Vikings*
4. *Lions*
5. *Bucs*

NFC WEST

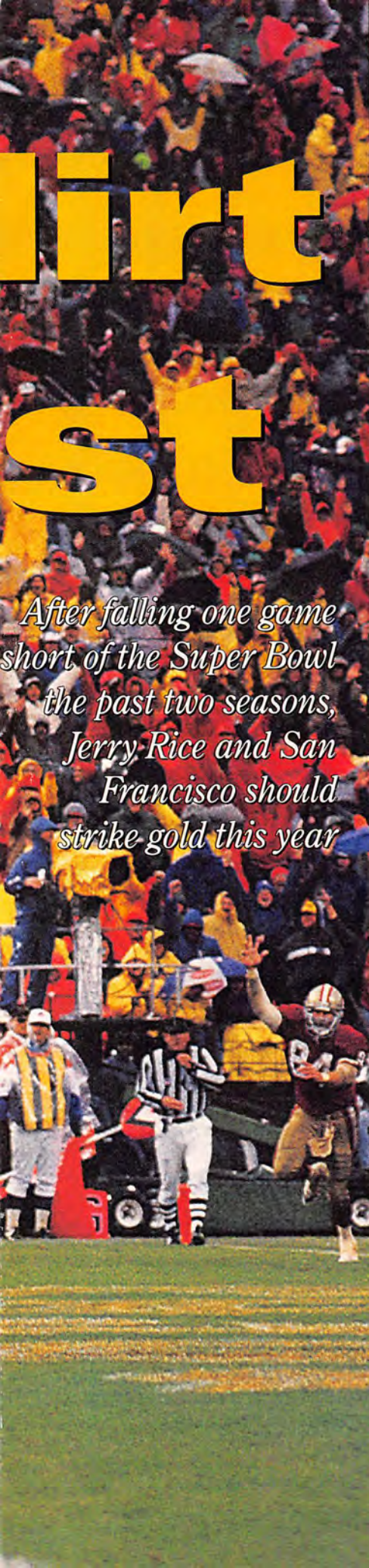
1. *49ers*
2. *Rams*
3. *Saints*
4. *Falcons*

NFC Championship Game

49ers over Cardinals

Super Bowl

49ers over Broncos



First

After falling one game short of the Super Bowl the past two seasons, Jerry Rice and San Francisco should strike gold this year

'94 NFL Preview

NFC By MIKE DITKA



THIS WILL BE THE YEAR THE SAN FRANCISCO 49ers unseat the Dallas Cowboys, the two-time defending Super Bowl champions. The 49ers made it to the NFC Championship Game in each of the last two seasons, but

because of their defense they were unable to stop the Cowboys. This past off-season the 49ers improved their defense by acquiring Ken Norton, Gary Plummer, and Richard Dent without suffering any key losses, and on offense they'll be dominant as usual with Steve Young, Jerry Rice, and Ricky Watters.

The Cowboys are going to feel the losses of Norton and Tony Casillas, and their team defense will suffer as a result. When people looked at the Cowboys' success, often they just concentrated on the offense and such great players as Troy Aikman, Emmitt Smith, and Michael Irvin. But Dallas' defense was just as instrumental in the two Super Bowl triumphs.

The Arizona Cardinals look to be the conference's up-and-coming team, one that will benefit from Buddy Ryan's presence. I see them overtaking the Cowboys for first place in the NFC East.

In the NFC Central, it probably will take only a 10-6 record to win the division, and almost any one of those teams can do it. The Packers have to be considered the favorites, and they have a chance to be one of the conference's elite teams as long as Brett Favre can cut down on his turnovers.

The Giants and Eagles weren't very active in the free-agent market and suffered some key personnel losses, and they won't be contenders this season. I like the Redskins to improve under Norv Turner, and I think they drafted an excellent young quarterback in Heath Shuler, who should excel in an offensive system that will closely resemble that of the Cowboys.

NFC East

Arizona Cardinals

Keys to last season: The Cardinals lost eight games by seven points or less; running back Ron Moore came out of nowhere to rush for more than 1,000 yards.

Important offseason acquisitions:

Head coach Buddy Ryan (Houston); QB Jim McMahon (Minnesota); LB Seth Joyner (Philadelphia); DE Clyde Simmons (Philadelphia); P Jeff Feagles (Philadelphia).

Important offseason departures:

QB Chris Chandler (L.A. Rams); P Rich Camarillo (Houston).

What to watch for: Buddy Ryan is just what this team has needed: a hard-nosed coach who will instill some confidence in the players and turn the franchise into a winner.

Ditka's analysis: Surprising as it

may seem, I see the Arizona Cardinals usurping the two-time Super Bowl champion Dallas Cowboys at the top of the NFC East this year. The Cardinals' strength without a doubt will be their defense. Buddy Ryan is the new coach in Arizona, and he'll have those guys playing his type of football—an aggressive, swarming defense. He'll try to intimidate people, which he's always done in the past, and he's got the horses to do it. He has inherited some pretty solid football players—defensive lineman Eric Swann, cornerback Aeneas Williams, and safety Chuck Cecil, to name a few—and the guys he brought in, former Eagles Seth Joyner and Clyde Simmons, are great acquisitions. The new kid, first-round linebacker Jamir Miller, has real potential.

Joyner, in my opinion, is one of the best linebackers in the league. He's never received the recognition he deserves, but in a high-profile defense like this one—and, face it, everybody's going to publicize Buddy's defense, like they always do—Joyner will get some publicity. In the Cardinals' system, the son of a gun will be as good as any linebacker in the league.

Last season the Cardinals were a play here and a play there from being a darn good football team instead of a 7-9 club. The biggest question mark surrounding this team will be its offense. Buddy's going to be running the ball—after serving as an assistant coach with the Houston Oilers, he understands that you can go to the graveyard by throwing it all the time. Ron Moore, who filled in for the injured Garrison Hearst, was a revelation last season, and if Hearst returns fully healthy Buddy's got two extremely talented guys to run the ball.

The emphasis on the running game will help quarterback Steve Beuerlein; I don't think he's the type of guy you want to have throw the ball 45 times a game. He's the kind of quarterback you'd like to see put the ball in the air 25 or 30 times, and then have the rest of the offense being controlled on the ground.

That, to me, will be the key. If the Cardinals offense can do anything, Arizona's going to win the division.

Dallas Cowboys

Keys to last season: After running back Emmitt Smith returned from his two-game hold-out, the road to a second straight Super Bowl victory was clear.

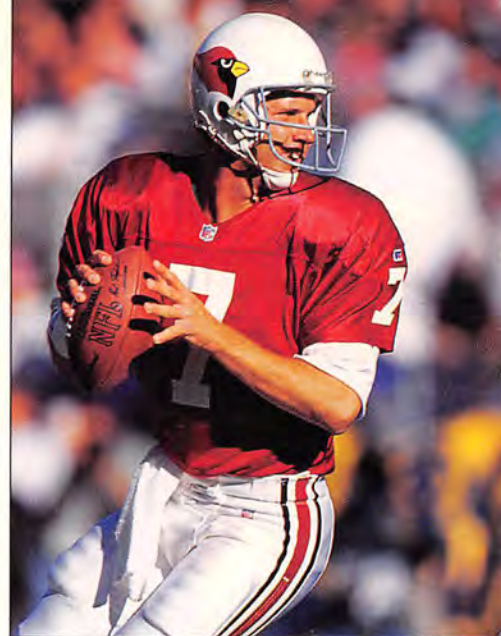
Important offseason acquisitions: Head coach Barry Switzer; QB Rodney Peete (Detroit); G Derek Kennard (New Orleans).

Important offseason departures: Head coach Jimmy Johnson (Fox network); offensive coordinator Norv Turner (Washington); LB Ken Norton (San Francisco); DT Tony Casillas (Kansas City); DT Jimmy Jones (L.A. Rams); G Kevin Gogan (L.A. Raiders); G John Gesek (Washington); QB Bernie Kosar (Miami); K Eddie Murray (Philadelphia).

What to watch for: All eyes will be on Dallas, where owner Jerry Jones has vowed he can win without Jimmy Johnson. If he can't, the entire state will be screaming for his head.

Ditka's analysis: The Cowboys are not going to win the division this season. As good as their football players are, they've taken something out of that organization that they had built in, and it's going to hurt them. It won't have much to do with the coaching, either, because basically they're going to run the same system they've run the last three years. It doesn't really matter if Barry Switzer or anybody else is coaching them.

The key for Dallas is to get off on the right foot. If the Cowboys can do that, they've got a chance to make it back to the Super Bowl. However, if they don't come



Beuerlein's new buddy will emphasize defense and rushing, not air shows.

out of the gate strong, I don't think they'll be able to overcome it.

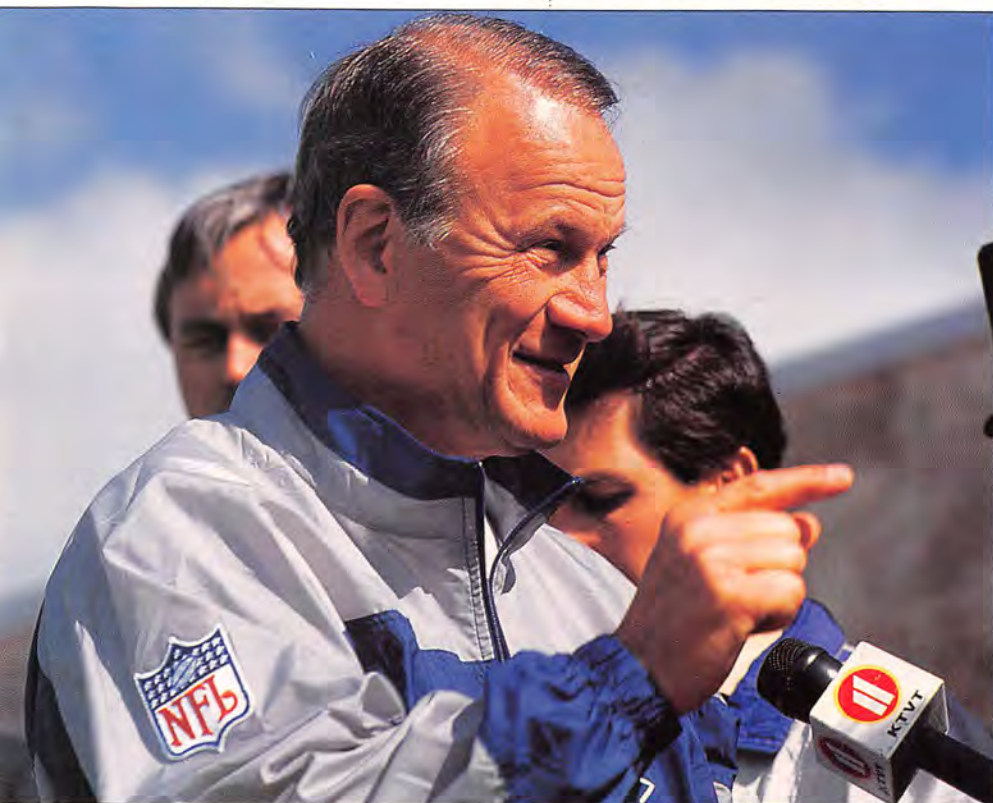
The Cowboys have always been a results team. They've gotten good results doing things a certain way, and if they can get the results, that's fine. The offense, of course, has loads of talent: quarterback Troy Aikman, running back Emmitt Smith, wide receiver Michael Irvin, tight end Jay Novacek, and a strong line. The whole unit returns almost completely intact—the key losses were guards Kevin Gogan and John Gesek—and it will continue to get results.

What people tend to overlook about the Cowboys, though, is that their defense has played so well as a unit the last couple of years. They've lost some parts of that team defense, most notably Ken Norton and Tony Casillas. Linebacker Robert Jones will be expected to fill Norton's shoes; the question with him never has been his athletic ability, but how smart a player he is.

The Cowboys still have the talent to go all the way, but I don't think it will happen. The bottom line will be how well their defense plays. The offense will play well enough—whether it'll be rated No. 1 or No. 2 in the league, I don't know. I don't think it'll be that high, but it will be good.

The defense is going to be the key, because it not only stopped people but produced turnovers. That's an essential part of football—if you can get the turnovers you can get field position, and then you've got a chance to score points. If you don't get the turnovers and you have to march 80 yards every possession, eight times a game, you're not going to win that many football games.

Switzer: The Cowboys have changed their head, but will the heart follow?



New York Giants

Keys to last season: Dan Reeves took over and revived the winning spirit in the Meadowlands, and Phil Simms played like a quarterback 10 years younger. A grueling overtime loss to the Cowboys on the last day of the season cost the Giants home-field advantage throughout the playoffs.

Important offseason acquisitions: G Lance Smith (Arizona).

Important offseason departures: LB Lawrence Taylor (retirement); QB Phil Simms (released); RB Lewis Tillman (Chicago); T Eric Moore (Cincinnati); CB Mark Collins (Kansas City); S Myron Guyton (New England); G Bob Kratch (New England); CB Perry Williams (N.Y. Jets).

What to watch for: Don't expect the Giants to play at the same level they did in '93. The offseason losses hurt, and the team did virtually nothing in the free-agent market to make up for the departures.

Ditka's analysis: Giants coach Dan Reeves probably received less help in the free-agent market than any other coach in the league, and he lost some key players in the secondary in Mark Collins and Myron Guyton. The Giants did not go out in the market and aggressively pursue anyone, like other teams did.

Still, Dan's going to win because of coaching; I really believe that. He's going to run the ball, and that's not a bad idea when you have a guy like Rodney Hampton to give it to. Phil Simms' release certainly changes things, of course. Dave Brown really hasn't played. He's completely untested, and that would be a problem to me. But he's their No. 1 pick in the supplemental draft, and they're going to play him.

But Dan doesn't have the receivers like he had in Denver to really run the offense he wants to run to complement his running game. With the Broncos he had the Three Amigos, three guys who could scoot, but when New York lost Mike Sherrard last year, it lost all its speed at that position. A key to the Giants season will be keeping Sherrard healthy, because then they'll have a downfield threat.

And if left tackle Jumbo Elliott and the rest of the offensive line can stay healthy, that will help the quarterback a lot. They lost Elliott last year for a good portion of the season with a bad back, and that hurt them.

Looking at their personnel on defense, there's nobody there you could put your finger on, no big-name player. Lawrence Taylor's gone; Carl Banks has been gone for a while. Dan's rebuilding the defense, and he's got some people who can play, but there are no impact players there. So the Giants are going to have to play a great

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team defense, which they did last year and didn't get a lot of credit for. They'll struggle without Collins, though, because the Giants could put him in man-to-man coverage and not worry about him, then cover up whoever they had to cover up. With Collins gone, it's questionable how much of that they can do.

The Giants may or may not be a .500 team talentwise, but Dan Reeves is better than a .500 coach.

Washington Redskins

Keys to last season: Richie Petitbon finally got his chance at head coaching, but the results were a disaster, and he was canned. Two years removed from a Super Bowl MVP, Mark Rypien was a quarterback with zero confidence; he, too, is out. One of the few bright spots was rookie running back Reggie Brooks.

Important offseason acquisitions:

Head coach Norv Turner (Dallas); QB Heath Shuler (draft); WR Henry Ellard (L.A. Rams); QB John Friesz (San Diego); G John Gesek (Dallas); LB Ken Harvey (Arizona); TE Ethan Horton (L.A. Raiders); C Trevor Matich (Indianapolis); S Keith Taylor (New Orleans); DE Tony Woods (L.A. Rams).

Important offseason departures:

Head coach Richie Petitbon (fired); RB Ernest Byner (Cleveland); WR Art Monk (N.Y. Jets); QB Mark Rypien (Cleveland).

What to watch for: Troy Aikman thrived in Turner's system in Dallas; can Shuler do the same in Washington? Perhaps down the line, but don't expect much in the first season.

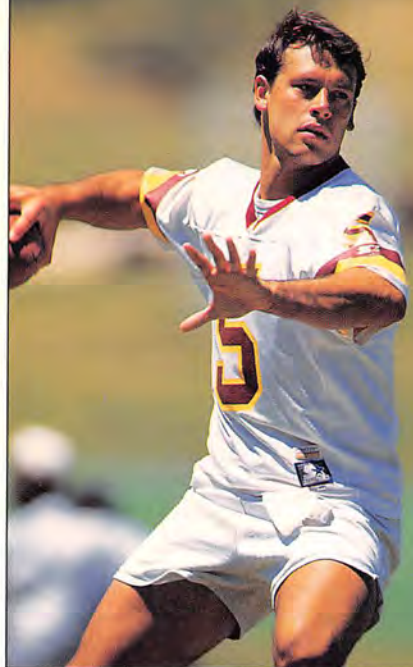
Ditka's analysis: I wouldn't be surprised if Heath Shuler, the No. 3 overall pick in the draft, ends up being the Redskins' starting quarterback early in the season—maybe not the first Sunday, but I would say very early in the season. From what I saw of Shuler in college, he looked like he was having fun playing football. He got things done, but it was not a life-and-death situation. Shuler has a great arm and good size, and he's tough. I think he's going to fit into new coach Norv Turner's system. In terms of talent, he's very raw and not nearly as refined as some other quarterbacks coming out of college, but he's a little bit like Troy Aikman in that he's got a gun.

The Redskins are going to change their whole defensive system. It will be very

similar to the Cowboys defense—which will help because that system can cover some people. The system plays four across, and then guys can come up or stay back and double the outside receivers. It looks kind of simple, but it's a good system, and it will help Washington's cornerbacks and safeties play a little better.

The Redskins have a chance to be a .500 team. I don't know if they'll be much better than that in the first year with Turner. But they've got a solid running back in Reggie Brooks, and Shuler's going to be a good quarterback. What the Redskins really need is for wide receiver Desmond Howard to step up big-time this season to justify his

First Cunningham got hurt, then he got shopped around.



A high pick, a great attitude, and a howitzer arm? You'll see Shuler soon.

high draft selection. The guy was a big disappointment for his former coaches, Joe Gibbs and Richie Petitbon; Richie tried to play him, but Howard just didn't get it done.

Philadelphia Eagles

Keys to last season: Philly jumped out to four straight wins but lost Randall Cunningham for the season when he broke his leg in the fourth game. The results were predictable: just four more wins the rest of the way. That the Eagles could salvage a .500 season is a testament to Rich Kotite's coaching.

Important offseason acquisitions:

DE Burt Grossman (San Diego); DE William Fuller (Houston); LB Jock Jones (Arizona); K Eddie Murray (Dallas).

Important offseason departures:

Owner Norman Braman; P Jeff Feagles (Arizona); LB Seth Joyner (Arizona); DE Clyde Simmons (Arizona).

What to watch for: Can Cunningham stay healthy? How will he react to the Eagles putting him on the trading block in the offseason? With all the talent that has departed, will it matter?

Ditka's analysis: The Eagles don't have a snowball's chance in hell this year. They just lost too many people. It will be tough for them to compete week after week in the division because of those losses. However, Philly will be respectable because of Rich Kotite and his staff.

The big question for the Eagles this season will be on offense, especially at quarterback. Can Randall Cunningham stay healthy for an entire season? How will he respond to the offseason trade rumors? I believe his play will be affected by the trade rumors because he went to Eagles management and talked about it. What



BOB ROSATO

happens in football sometimes—in all of sports, actually—is that people get to a certain point and think they become indispensable. But there's no indispensable person on any team, and I think Randall is realizing that.

Even though the Eagles defense lost some key people—Reggie White last season, Seth Joyner and Clyde Simmons this year—it still can play good, sound football. Defensive coordinator Bud Carson is a hell of a coach, and he still has some people who can play in the linebacking corps and in cornerback Eric Allen.

I don't think former Eagles owner Norman Braman had any desire to keep the team intact; I think he decided to let some of those players go because he knew he was going to sell the team. That places a burden on Kotite and his staff, but they did get some draft picks to eventually replace the players they lost.

The Eagles could be a little better than they were last year. If you watched some of the games last year, you know they could have won the Cowboys game in Philadelphia very easily, and actually, they didn't play that bad a game against the Cowboys in Texas Stadium, either. Emmitt Smith broke both games open with long fourth-quarter runs. This team probably is going to win some games people don't expect it to win, but I can't see the Eagles being a contender this year at all.

NFC Central

Green Bay Packers

Keys to last season: Quarterback Brett Favre led the NFL with 24 interceptions, and the Packers as a team were seventh in the league in turnovers, with 34.

Important offseason acquisitions: RB Reggie Cobb (Tampa Bay); DE Sean Jones (Houston); DT Steve McMichael (Chicago).

Important offseason departures: LB Tony Bennett (Indianapolis)

What to watch for: After experiencing some playoff success last season, Packers fans are banking on Favre to become more consistent and take the team to the next step. Reggie Cobb should shore up the Packers' weak running attack.

Ditka's analysis: The Packers are the team to beat in the NFC Central this season. They've got a good coach in Mike Holmgren, and I like the direction they're going. However, for them to rank among the conference's elite this season, Brett Favre has got to learn when to take a bad

play and leave it be, not turn it into a disaster. In other words, he can't just throw the ball away unless he's getting rid of it safely. In 1992, his breakthrough year, he threw 18 touchdown passes and just 13 interceptions; last year he tossed 19 touchdown passes but was picked off 24 times. Favre got better at the end of the year, and I think that's because Mike told him you just can't do that. He really cost them a couple of games with bad plays, but I think he's a heck of a football player. His consistency will be critical this season.

Losing first-round pick Aaron Taylor, a big offensive lineman out of Notre Dame, to a torn-up knee is going to hurt, because the Packers had him penciled in to be a starting offensive guard. Their line was one of their weaknesses last year, along with running the football. Green Bay's running game should be helped by the acquisition of Reggie Cobb; the question is, can the Packers keep Cobb's head on straight? He's a good football player, and he played

some great games in Tampa Bay, but some players who end up in Green Bay tend to get a little goofy once the weather turns—let's face it, it's not heaven up there. Hopefully Reggie can handle the cold.

Sterling Sharpe is the best receiver in football. I don't care about the other guys—this guy plays hurt, he's tough, and he can run with the ball after the catch. And he catches 100 passes a season even though defenses key on him. They know he's going to get the ball because the Packers have no one on the other side to relieve the pressure on him.

The defense was second in the NFL last year, thanks in part to the arrival of Reggie White, who had 13 sacks. Green Bay loses a talented linebacker in Tony Bennett but adds defensive end Sean Jones, who had 13 sacks last year with the Oilers, so it should be a pretty good defense again this year.

Turnovers killed the Packers last season—they probably lost three football games just by turning the ball over—and



Favre's bad judgment under pressure is the only blot in the Pack's picture.

turnovers will determine their fate this year. That's where Favre will be key. If he doesn't turn the football over, they can be a lot better.

Chicago Bears

Keys to last season: The offense was anemic in 1993, ranking 28th in the league. The defense ranked fourth overall, a marked improvement from 17th a season before.

Important offseason acquisitions: QB Erik Kramer (Detroit); FB Merrill Hoge (Pittsburgh); RB Lewis Tillman (New York); T Andy Heck (Seattle); WR Jeff Graham (Pittsburgh); QB Steve Walsh (New Orleans); TE Marv Cook (New England).

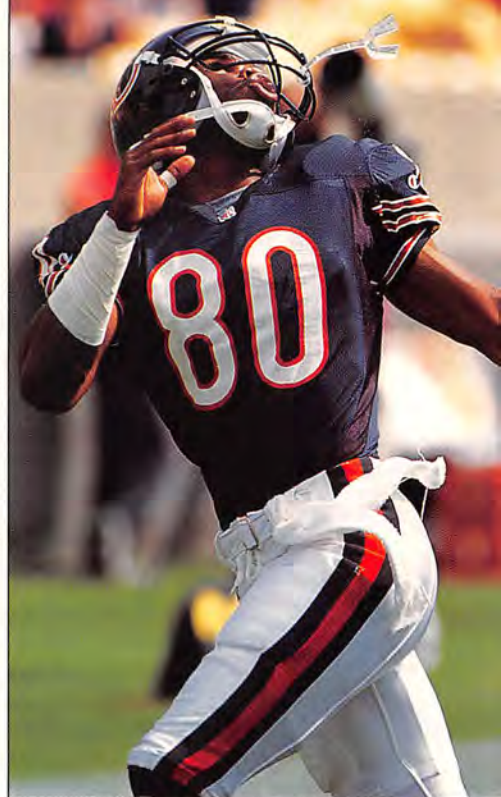
Important offseason departures: QB Jim Harbaugh (Indianapolis); DE Richard Dent (San Francisco); DT Steve McMichael (Green Bay); RB Neal Anderson (released); RB Craig Heyward (released); QB Peter Tom Willis (released); T Keith Van Horne (retired).

What to watch for: The offense underwent a facelift with the additions of Kramer, Tillman, and Hoge, and it will improve. The offensive line must provide protection for Kramer, and the Bears desperately need their 1993 first-rounder, wideout Curtis Conway, to make an impact on offense.

Ditka's analysis: Two areas, more

than any others, will determine whether the Bears make the playoffs: the running game and the offensive line. Lewis Tillman is a great addition to replace the departed Neal Anderson, and Merrill Hoge is a much better football player than Craig (Ironhead) Heyward. It remains to be seen whether Erik Kramer is better than Jim Harbaugh. In 1991 we won 11 games with Harbaugh, but Kramer never has won 11 games for Detroit in a season; in fact, he never could hold on to the starter's job. Still, Kramer impressed me last year, when he took over in the final month of the season and led the Lions to the division title. I liked the decisions he made and the poise he showed standing in the pocket. Hopefully the Bears offensive line will give him enough time to stand in there; Chicago hopes former Seahawk Andy Heck can serve as an anchor.

Defensively, the Bears lost some key people in Steve McMichael and Richard Dent, but they still have Trace Armstrong, Chris Zorich, Dante Jones, and Mark Carrier. The linebackers are solid, and the secondary is experienced. Cornerback Donnell Woolford seems to be getting better and better every year. First-rounder



The Bears' offensive prospects will look up if Conway finally blossoms.

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John Thierry will move from linebacker, which he played in college, to right end and will be expected to assume Dent's pass-rushing duties—but that's going to be a tough job for a rookie.

The offense also will need wide receiver Curtis Conway to produce consistently this season and emerge as a deep threat; he caught just 19 passes last year. As a former No. 1 pick you would hope something nice would happen. Jerry Rice and Sterling Sharpe, both of whom were No. 1 picks, blossomed after starting slowly, but it hasn't happened with Desmond Howard, and it may not happen with Conway. It's hard to say. When you pick a receiver No. 1, you're saying, hey, this is a special guy. He's going to be a big-play guy. He's got to be a tough guy. He's got to be a guy who doesn't bitch and just goes out and plays.

When I was with the Bears all the writers would refer to our drafts as "Ditka's draft," which was really a fallacy. A

lot of people didn't realize that the players we selected were not my first picks. I think coach Dave Wannstedt has some control over the draft-day decisions. I really don't know who else would have it, because the owner knows nothing about football.

Minnesota Vikings

Keys to last season: Minnesota's "rent-a-quarterback" philosophy met with marginal results last year as Jim McMahon was broken down for significant chunks of the season. The Vikings defense was No. 1 in the NFL.

Important offseason acquisitions: QB Warren Moon (Houston); T Chris Hinton (Atlanta); CB David Pool (Denver); QB Andre Ware (Detroit); TE Adrian Cooper (Pittsburgh).

Important offseason departures: DE Chris Doleman (Atlanta); G Todd Kalis (Pittsburgh); T Tim Irwin (Tampa Bay); QB Jim McMahon (Arizona); QB Sean Salisbury (Houston).

What to watch for: How will Moon operate in Dennis Green's offense without the weapons he had in Houston? How will the defense cope without Doleman and his 12.5 sacks of 1993?

Ditka's analysis: The Vikings' strength always has been their defense, and they've made a lot of changes on the

defensive side of the ball the last couple of years. I don't know that they'll be as good without Chris Doleman as they were with him, because he was a big part of that unit. And if they're not as good, it's going to affect some of the other guys, because Doleman was a player you had to account for all the time—especially when you're playing in that dome. You had to know where he was, you had to be there to block him, and most of the time you had to be alert to double-team him. That was the great advantage they had with him. James Harris and Robert Harris figure to compete for Doleman's right end spot.

I'm not entirely convinced Warren Moon is going to be as effective in the Vikings offense as he was in the run-and-shoot. Moon has a good arm, and he's still in great shape, but, going back to his CFL days, he's been operating under the run-and-shoot for the past 16 years.

Coach Dennis Green will try to operate a San Francisco-style offense, where once he establishes the pass, he can hurt you with the running game. The Vikings should be better on the ground with the return of Terry Allen—who missed all of last season with a knee injury—second-year player

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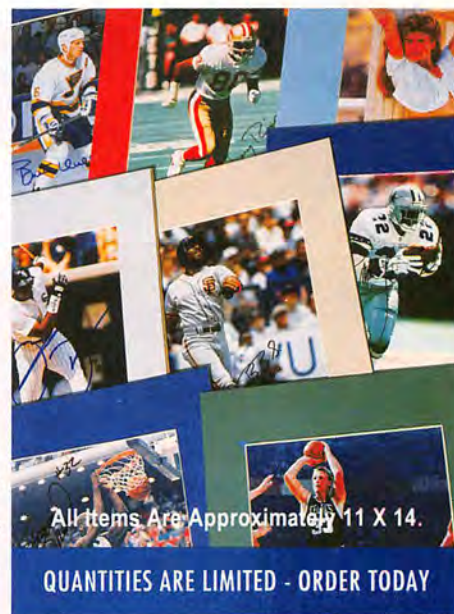
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Robert Smith, and Scottie Graham, who had back-to-back 100-yard games late in the season.

The Vikings should challenge the Packers for the Central Division title, but in terms of the winning it all they're still a couple of players away. The keys to Minnesota's success will be how well the replacement for Doleman plays, and how well their defense plays as a whole. Whether it'll be able to pressure people and create turnovers the way they have in the past remains to be seen.

Detroit Lions

Keys to last season: The erratic Rodney Peete never quite found his groove, tossing 21 interceptions. Only when coach Wayne Fontes settled on third-stringer Erik Kramer did the Lions find any quarterback consistency and success. Running back Barry Sanders got sidetracked from another rushing title when he missed the last five games of the season with a knee injury.

Important offseason acquisitions: QB Scott Mitchell (Miami); TE Ron Hall (Tampa Bay); LB Mike Johnson (Cleveland); QB David Krieg (Kansas City); CB Robert Massey (Arizona); P Greg Montgomery (Houston).

Important offseason departures: P Jim Arnold (Miami); WR Jeff Campbell (Denver); CB Ray Crockett (Denver); LB Dennis Gibson (San Diego); QB Erik Kramer (Chicago); QB Rodney Peete (Dallas); QB Andre Ware (Minnesota).

What to watch for: Will Mitchell become an elite quarterback now that he's a starter for an entire season, or will he sputter in a new offensive system? The Lions will continue to feed the ball to Sanders and to underrated wide receiver Herman Moore.

Ditka's analysis: I really don't know that losing Erik Kramer and acquiring free agent Scott Mitchell for \$11 million over three years was the answer for this team—and I'm a Scott Mitchell fan. He has to prove that he can direct a team for an entire season, because he hasn't really played in a lot of games. You look at the guy and you say, well, physically he's got all the tools; he has the size and strength. But that's not the answer in football. The key is, what are you going to do with those tools? When the Dolphins called on Mitchell to fill in for the injured Dan Marino last season, he did a lot of the same things Brett Favre did—turning the ball over and throwing it when he shouldn't. He's definitely going to have to earn his money in Detroit this season.

I like what the Lions are doing on offense. Of course, they have Barry Sanders, and they have some fine tight ends in Rodney Holman and newly acquired Ron Hall, and they've got some good receivers, especially in Herman Moore, who caught 61 passes last season.

As great a running back as Sanders is, I don't think he'll regain the rushing title from Emmitt Smith this year. Smith's a guy who plays hurt, whether it's a separated shoulder or a charley horse. He's tough, a lot like Walter Payton. I don't think Sanders is that way. Sanders is a great talent as a runner, but I don't see the same toughness in him that I see in Smith.

On defense, the acquisition of cornerback Robert Massey should help the Lions secondary and improve their overall speed on defense. The return of Bennie Blades



BRUCE L. SCHWARTZMAN

Facing the bloodied Spielman is like carrying fresh meat into a lion's den.

from a broken ankle will make them that much more solid. To me, the heart of Detroit's defense is linebacker Chris Spielman—my kind of player. He led the team in tackles for the sixth straight year, with 148. Detroit's defense ranked sixth in the NFL last year, and it should be solid again this season.

The Lions definitely will compete, but a lot will depend on how well they fare against teams such as Chicago and Tampa Bay. I don't see them being much better than a .500 club.

Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Keys to last season: Quarterback Craig Erickson showed promise, but the offense finished 25th overall and scored just 237 points. The defense ranked 22nd overall and gave up 376 points. Enough said.

Important offseason acquisitions: QB Trent Dilfer (draft); S Thomas Everett (Dallas); DE Jeff Hunter (Miami); T Tim Irwin (Minnesota); LB Lonnie Marts (Kansas City); CB Tony Stargell (Indianapolis).

Important offseason departures: RB Reggie Cobb (Green Bay); TE Ron Hall (Detroit); CB Ricky Reynolds (New England); DE Ray Seals (Pittsburgh).

What to watch for: An Erickson-Dilfer quarterback controversy is all but inevitable. Rookie running back Errict Rhett will be called on to fill Cobb's shoes. Is this the season the Bucs finish at .500? No.

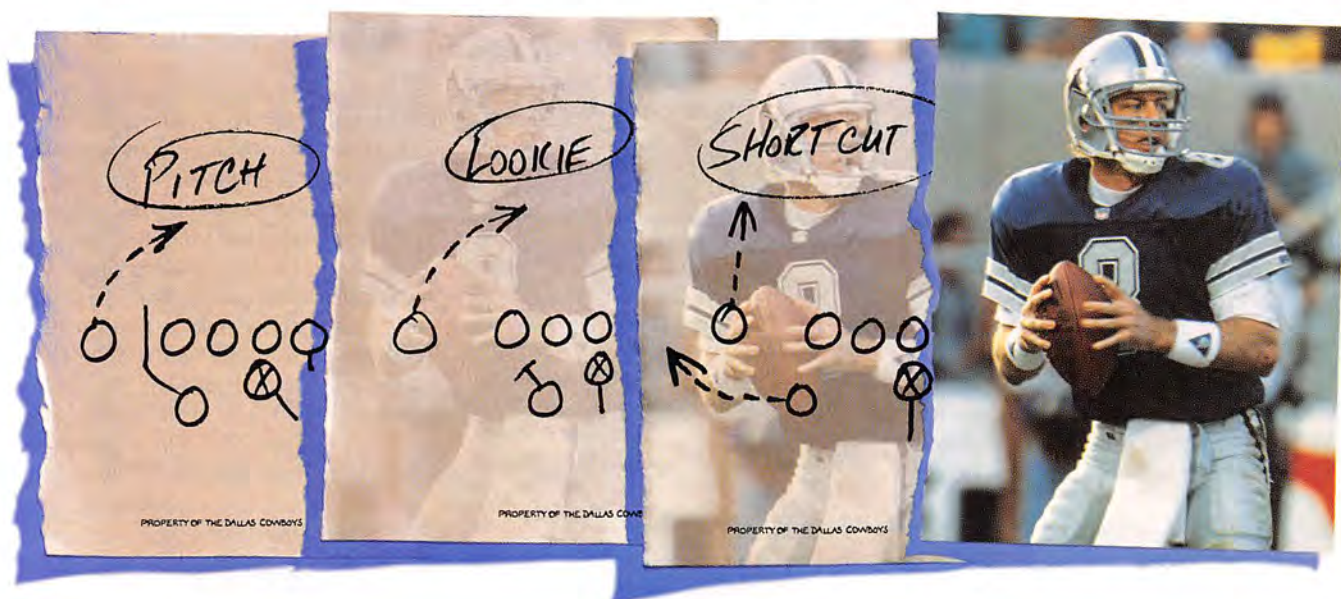
Ditka's analysis: There's no reason the Buccaneers can't improve on their 5-11 record from last season. I liked what I saw

We're not pulling your leg—Moon's in for a post-Houston adjustment.



STEVE WOLTMANN

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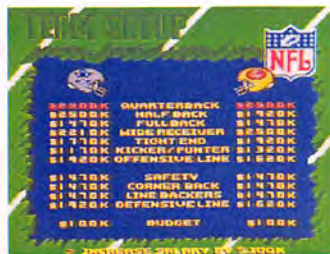
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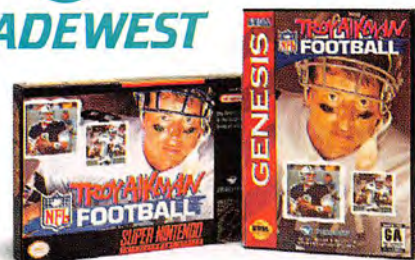
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Erickson looked good late in '93, but the draft blew in some competition.

from Craig Erickson toward the end of last season, and I think coach Sam Wyche's comfort level with him is much better. Even though the team drafted Trent Dilfer, I think Sam feels Erickson could be the franchise's quarterback of the future. Erickson will have to be on top of his game, however, because there will be some pressure to play Dilfer since he was selected so high in the draft (sixth overall).

Tampa Bay lost its top running back, Reggie Cobb, to the Packers, but 1994 second-round pick Errict Rhett of Florida has the opportunity to have an immediate impact in the Bucs running attack. I like wide receivers Lawrence Dawsey and Courtney Hawkins—especially how Hawkins came on strong late last season. The offensive line is pretty solid, so they should be able to run the ball effectively. If they can do that, Sam won't have to worry so much about tricking everybody with his offensive play-calling.

The defense has a number of good young players—Hardy Nickerson, Santana Dotson, Eric Curry—who all should have good seasons this year. The pickup of safety Thomas Everett is a good one for their secondary, but the loss of cornerback Ricky Reynolds to the Patriots hurts.

The Buccaneers were near the bottom of the league on both offense and defense last season, so they'll definitely be looking to improve those rankings. They do have the potential to be close to .500 this season. I view them as comparable to the Eagles:

Niners foes who focus on the pass find themselves facing rough Watters.

'94NFLPreview

Neither has a chance to win it all, but both have the ability to surprise some teams.

NFC West

San Francisco 49ers

Keys to last season: Pile up all the points and all the yardage you want, and post the most impressive QB ratings in the world—but unless you win the big one it doesn't mean a thing.

Important offseason acquisitions: DE Richard Dent (Chicago); LB Ken Norton (Dallas); LB Gary Plummer (San Diego).

Important offseason departures: CB Don Griffin (Cleveland); TE Jamie Williams (L.A. Raiders); TE Wesley Walls (New Orleans); CB Michael McGruder (Tampa Bay); QB Steve Bono (Kansas City).

What to watch for: After two consecutive losses in the NFC title game, Steve Young will be trying finally to get the Niners over the hump with what is far and away the best offense in the NFL. The defense may be improved just enough to do it.

Ditka's analysis: I expect the 49ers to win it all this season. I like their off-season defensive acquisitions in Ken Norton, Gary Plummer, and Richard Dent. The only question that remains with this team is whether Steve Young—the league's highest-rated quarterback the past three seasons—can win the big game. Offensively, they have a great back in Ricky Watters, who's a little flaky but is a good blocker and receiver, and a tough runner. Tight end Brent Jones is as good a receiving tight end

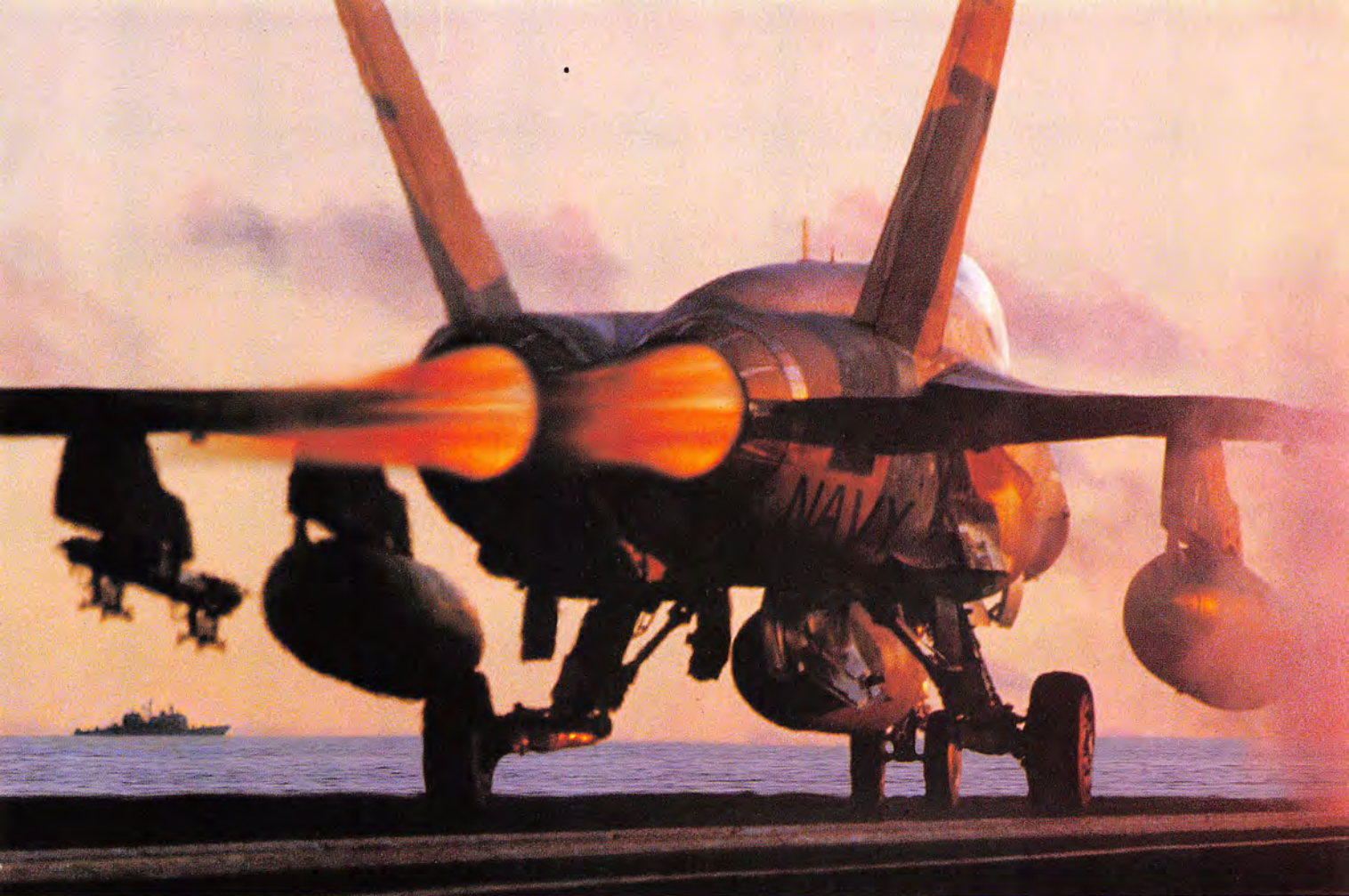
as there is in the business; he caught 68 passes for 735 yards and three touchdowns. Of course, the wide receivers, Jerry Rice and John Taylor, rank among the game's elite. And San Francisco's offensive line reminds me of the old Cowboys line: It's not real massive guys, but it's agile and can move.

The 49ers lost to Dallas in the NFC Championship Game because of their defense. They're trying to get tougher. They've got solid defensive people on their line, and they drafted on the defensive side of the ball the last couple of years. That should help them. Dana Stubblefield enjoyed an outstanding rookie season with 10.5 sacks and should be even better this season. He'll be paired with San Francisco's top draft pick, Bryant Young out of Notre Dame, who looks to have an immediate impact. The only question regarding their defense is how well it can play on the corners, especially considering the loss of Don Griffin.

Backup quarterback is the other real area of concern for the 49ers. If Steve Young goes down to an injury, San Francisco will have to rely on either Elvis Grbac or Bill Musgrave, since Steve Bono was traded to the Kansas City Chiefs.

I picked the 49ers to win the Super Bowl last year, and I'm going to pick them again. People have to realize that the last two years they've gotten all the way to the conference championship game without a great defense. Now, thanks to an aggres-





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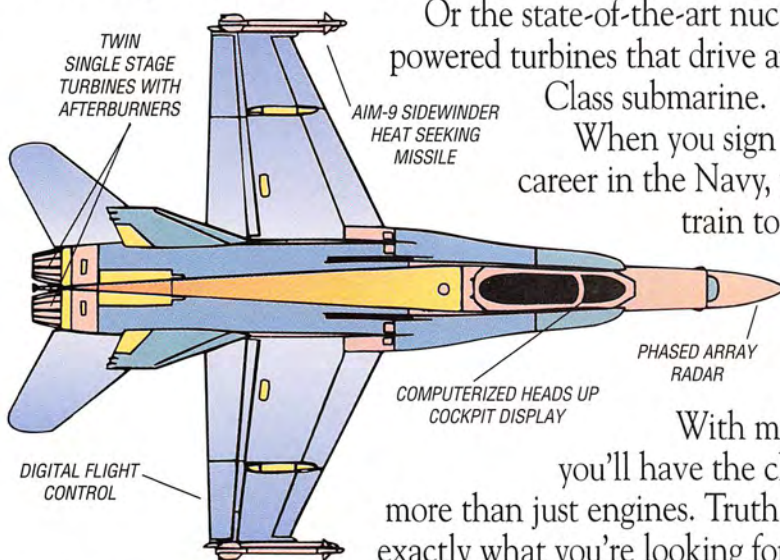
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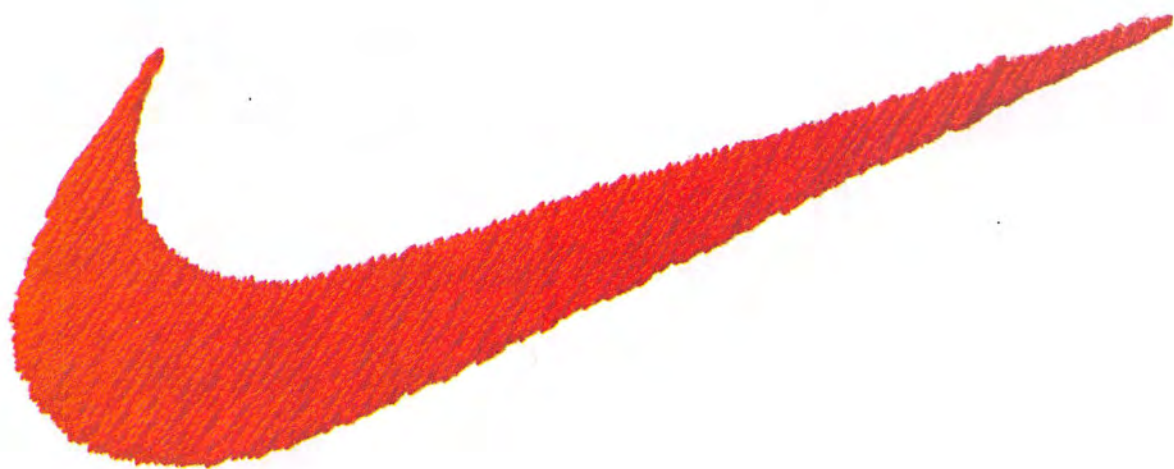
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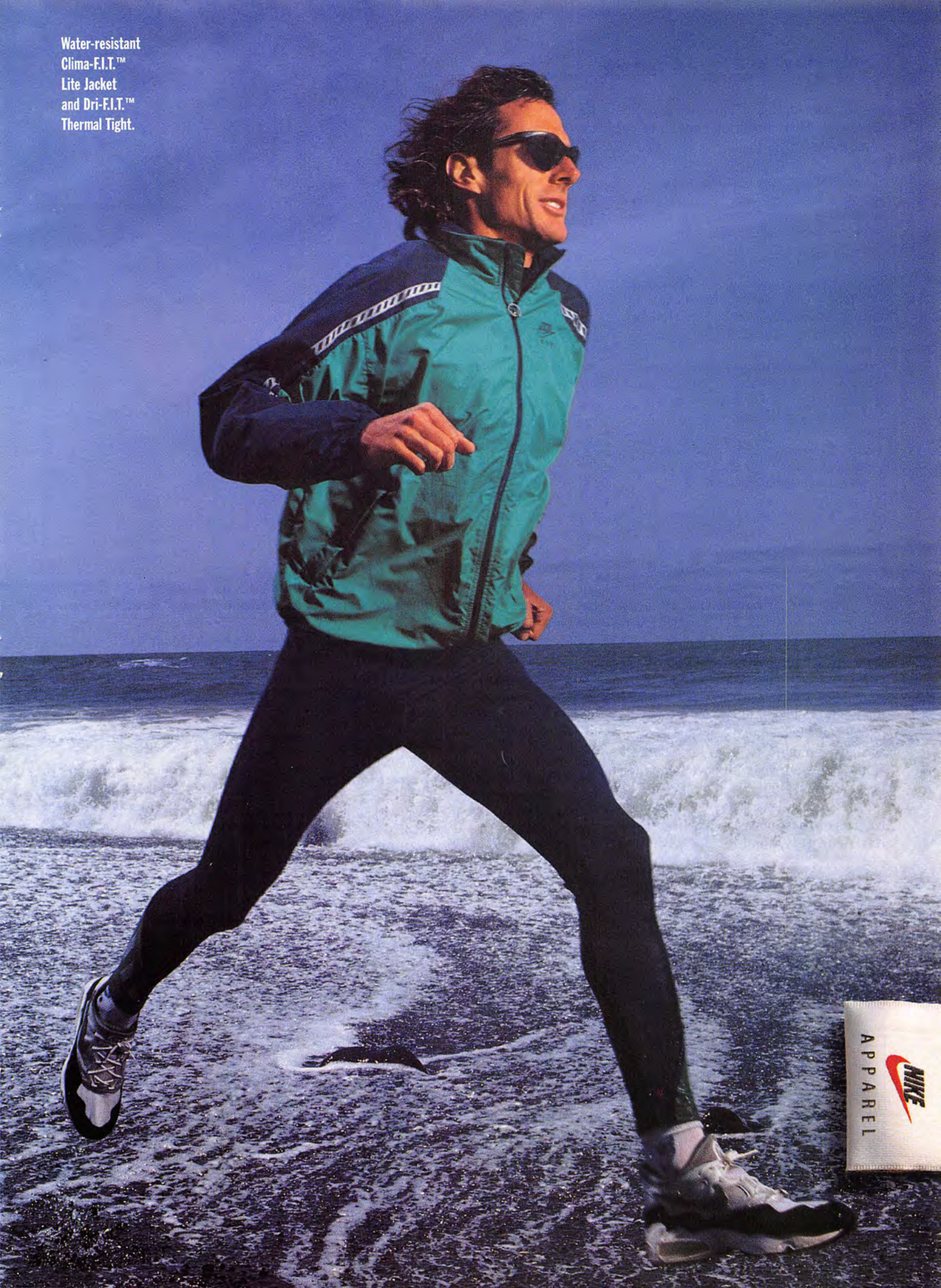


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sive offseason, that defense looks much-improved. That should be enough to put San Francisco over the top.

Los Angeles Rams

Keys to last season: Not much to cheer about except for rookie Jerome Bettis, who challenged for the NFL rushing title with 1,429 yards. Jim Everett's L.A. saga ended in ugly fashion.

Important offseason acquisitions: QB Chris Miller (Atlanta); QB Chris Chandler (Arizona); DE Jimmy Jones (Dallas); WR Greg McMurtry (New England); CB Terry Taylor (Cleveland).

Important offseason departures: WR Henry Ellard (Washington); QB Jim Everett (New Orleans); TE Pat Carter (Houston); S Michael Stewart (Miami); S Pat Terrell (N.Y. Jets).

What to watch for: A move up in the standings, or out of town? The former could go far toward preempting the latter.

Ditka's analysis: The Rams could be a sleeper this season, and I hope they are because I happen to like Chuck Knox. He has a great running back in Jerome Bettis, who's as good as I've seen in a long time. He's another guy who looks like he's having fun playing football. The acquisition of quarterback Chris Miller looks to be a good one for the Rams, as long as he can stay healthy. Miller is very mobile and has some playoff experience. When I was with the Bears we liked Miller a lot coming out of college. I know he's been beat up a lot and he's coming back from knee surgery, so the Rams are going to have to do their best to protect him.

Los Angeles doesn't possess one of the league's greatest offensive lines, but Knox has some veterans in there with Tom

Newberry and Jackie Slater. On the defensive side of the ball they have one of the league's best defensive tackles in Sean Gilbert. The Rams secondary needs Todd Lyght for an entire season; they really missed him when he went down after nine games last season.

This year L.A. will miss Henry Ellard, who led the club in catches last season with 61 for 945 yards. This guy is a hell of a football player—I tell you, I can't understand how he keeps on doing it. I mean, here's a guy who's entering his 12th season; when I was coaching against him it seemed like every time I turned around, Ellard was catching a pass against us.

This team could surprise some people. If Miller stays healthy, the Rams could compete for a playoff spot as a wild card.

New Orleans Saints

Keys to last season: The Aints followed a 5-0 start with a pathetic 3-8 mark the rest of the way. Quarterback Wade Wilson slumped badly, and the defense wasn't able to make up for Jim Mora's humdrum attack.

Important offseason acquisitions: QB Jim Everett (L.A. Rams); WR Michael Haynes (Atlanta); C Jeff Uhlenhake (Miami); TE Wesley Walls (San Francisco).

Important offseason departures: G Derek Kennard (Dallas); WR Floyd Turner (Indianapolis); S Gene Atkins (Miami); S Keith Taylor (Washington).

What to watch for: Everett's resurrection? He'll at least have some good receivers to throw to in Haynes and Eric Martin. Derek Brown leads a deep running corps with Vaughn Dunbar, Lorenzo Neal, Brad Muster, and rookie Mario Bates—if they all can stay healthy. Age is a concern on the defense.

Ditka's analysis: I really hope the change of scenery is good for Jim Everett and his career. I like the job coach Jim Mora has done in New Orleans. However, the Saints have lived by their defense for a long time, and when the defense couldn't produce the turnovers and couldn't play as well as it had in the past, the team was real-

The Saints' woes may not be Mora's fault, but he'll still catch the heat.



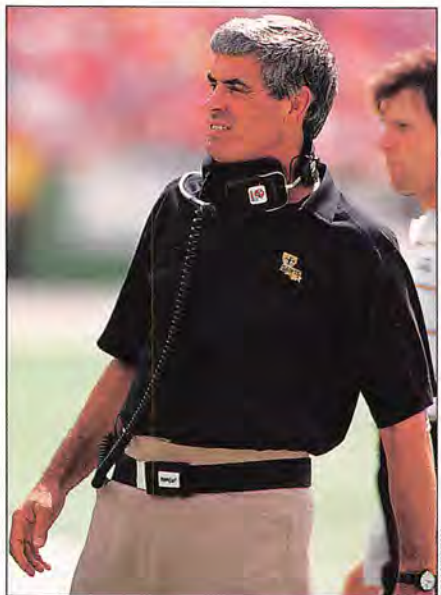
Natural-born killer: It's as if Bettis was meant to tote the pigskin in Ground Chuck's power game.

ly hurt. As a result, I don't see New Orleans contending this year. The defense won't get much better, and neither will the offense. The Saints probably will be a .500 team—but they'll win a couple of games that they shouldn't because of their special teams or defense.

There's no question Mora is going to face some heat this season. Saints fans are pretty demanding, and they've gotten a taste of success by getting to the playoffs, but the team hasn't won. That makes people start to think, what's missing?

I can tell you this: It's not the coaching. The Saints still are missing some people. They don't have all the people they need to have right now. I watched them last year as they progressed through the season, and they looked like they changed the way they did things offensively.

When I was coaching the Bears, the Saints always hurt you with great play-action. They could run off the pass, and they ran a lot of crossing routes. It seemed to me they kind of got away from the play-action. They tried to get into more of a spread offense by going to four wide receivers, and I'm not sure that's what they're all about. I think they're a two-back offense—change formations, shift the tight end, and then run their crossing action and play-action. If they do that, they'll be more successful.





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Atlanta Falcons

Keys to last season: Erric Pegram was a nice surprise, rushing for 1,185 yards, and the offense once again was flying high (it ranked sixth overall in the league), but the defense remained pathetic, yielding an NFL-worst 385 points.

Important offseason acquisitions:

Head coach June Jones; QB Jeff George (Indianapolis); DE Chris Doleman (Minnesota); T Irv Eatman (L.A. Rams); CB D.J. Johnson (Pittsburgh); WR Terance Mathis (N.Y. Jets); CB Kevin Ross (Kansas City); G Mike Zandofsky (San Diego).

Important offseason departures:

Head coach Jerry Glanville (fired); QB Chris Miller (L.A. Rams); T Chris Hinton (Minnesota); WR Michael Haynes (New Orleans); WR Michael Pritchard (Denver).

What to watch for: Quarterback Jeff George gets a chance at new life in Atlanta. If he can get his head together, he should flourish in June Jones' version of the run-and-shoot attack. But even with the addition of Doleman, the defense remains a question mark.

Ditka's analysis: I've never been a big fan of the "red gun" offense, and I'm not about to start now. It's basically the run-and-shoot, and in this league you just don't win consistently with that style of offense. You're seeing a lot of teams going away from it. Besides, any team that doesn't carry a tight end is stupid.

It's no secret I'm not a big Jeff George fan. If his career doesn't get on track in Atlanta, what's he going to do—ask to be traded again? I just don't understand him. To me, he has a lot to prove this year. He got what he wanted, so it's time for him to produce.

Atlanta's offense lost some good receivers in Michael Haynes and Mike Pritchard, so the Falcons need some of these young guys to step up, especially top pick Bert Emanuel, a second-rounder. Defensively, they got better by acquiring Chris Doleman, who should improve their pass rush significantly. The problem last season was that when the Falcons fell behind they would come out blitzing, and I don't think that's what you do to catch up. They need to get smarter defensively.

The key for the Falcons defensively is Deion Sanders. If he plays, he's the one guy Atlanta can play man-to-man on the other team's best receiver and still play a zone defense. Last year Sanders had seven interceptions in just 11 games, and without him at corner this year, the Falcons defense won't be the same—it'll have to line up legitimately and find ways to double people and cover people. ■

MIKE DITKA worked with senior associate editor JOHN HAREAS on this article.

Predicted Order of Finish

Playoff teams in *italics*

AFC EAST

1. *Dolphins*
2. *Bills*
3. *Jets*
4. *Patriots*
5. *Colts*

AFC CENTRAL

1. *Steelers*
2. *Oilers*
3. *Browns*
4. *Bengals*

AFC WEST

1. *Broncos*
2. *Raiders*
3. *Chiefs*
4. *Seahawks*
5. *Chargers*

AFC Championship Game

Broncos over Dolphins

Super Bowl

49ers over Broncos



Mile-High Hopes

'94 NFL Preview

AFC By **BOB TRUMPY**



LAST YEAR WAS THE AFC'S BEST CHANCE TO WIN the Super Bowl. Buffalo put on a great show in the big game, except for one player: Thurman Thomas.

As the game started, I wanted to see how Buffalo would react to its first turnover. Remember that in the team's first Super Bowl meeting with Dallas the year before, nine Bills turnovers led to a 52-17 drubbing.

After Thomas' first turnover in last year's Super Bowl, he got up and said, "My fault. I'm sorry, I caused that, my fault." But after he fumbled again as the second half started, he had his head down. Suddenly, he had cramps, he went to the sideline, and he stopped being a player at that point. I think if anybody else had turned over the ball, Buffalo would have won that game. As it was, however, the Bills lost 30-13—the AFC's 10th straight defeat in the Super Bowl.

I don't like the AFC's chances this year. I can't pick any team that's on the same level as San Francisco or Dallas, at least until the Cowboys prove me wrong.

Nevertheless, some of the acquisitions the AFC has made this year have been interesting. It's been an extremely active conference. In the past, you would see a lot of players go from the AFC to the NFC. Now, however, players such as receiver Anthony Miller (San Diego to Denver), offensive tackle Howard Ballard (Buffalo to Seattle), and fullback John L. Williams (Seattle to Pittsburgh) are moving within the conference. There now is some fellowship in the AFC.

There also are some coaches showing up in the AFC who have that NFC mentality (for example, New England's Bill Parcells). And that NFC mentality is to kick the crap out of the opposition on every play. Offense or defense, it makes no difference—just beat the daylights out of the opposition.

As the season nears, I like Denver a lot. With some key offseason acquisitions—most notably wide receivers Miller and Michael Pritchard—John Elway and the Broncos will be tough. I also like the Dolphins; a healthy Dan Marino could put Miami over the top. And, no, you never can count out Buffalo. The Bills always find a way to make it to the Super Bowl.

Denver's offseason moves have supplied John Elway with the weapons he needs to take aim at the AFC crown

AFC East

Miami Dolphins

Keys to last season: When quarterback Dan Marino tore his Achilles tendon in the Dolphins' fifth game of the season, Miami's bid for a Super Bowl appearance was gone. The loss of cornerback Troy Vincent to a knee injury didn't help matters, either. The Dolphins ended the year in a tailspin, losing their last five games and allowing what had seemed a certain playoff appearance to slip away.

Important offseason acquisitions:

P Jim Arnold (Detroit); QB Bernie Kosar (Dallas); CB Tyrone Braxton (Denver).

Important offseason departures:

QB Scott Mitchell (Detroit); C Jeff Uhlenhake (New Orleans); S Louis Oliver (Cincinnati).

What to watch for: Good health is the key for Miami. If Marino and Vincent, among others, can avoid the injury bug, the Dolphins should be a force in 1994.

Trumpy's analysis: There are three reasons why the Dolphins should have an excellent season: (1) Quarterback Dan Marino is coming back after suffering a

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'94 **NFL** Preview

torn Achilles tendon in the fifth game of '93; (2) their defensive backfield is superb; and (3) they still have a solid offensive line.

Marino's comeback should be one of the game's most entertaining stories this season. Since he entered the league in 1983, Marino has had the ability literally to take over a football game. You seldom find athletes who can operate at that level. At 32 and with his Achilles injury, I'm not sure he can do that anymore, but for the first time in his career he had to sit out—and it drove him crazy. Being back in the huddle has put the smile back on his face. It definitely will be fun to watch Marino after he has been out for a year.

The key to the defense is whether cornerback Troy Vincent can return fully from the knee injury he suffered last season. Coach Don Shula says he seldom has been around a player who can influence a team as quickly as Vincent can. He's the type of player any coach would want. Like Deion Sanders, Vincent is a player a coach simply can turn loose and not worry about for the rest of the day. Even with the loss of free-agent safety Louis Oliver, the defensive backfield will be strong if Vincent is healthy.

However, the Dolphins need two big

defensive lineman; last season's defense was ranked 25th in the league in quarterback sack percentage and 14th against the run. The lack of linemen could be the difference for the Dolphins, but that's no secret to them. Still, if Marino and Vincent are in form, Miami is the team to beat.

Buffalo Bills

Keys to last season: Buffalo defied the critics once again in '93 and rolled to its fourth straight Super Bowl appearance—and fourth straight Super Bowl loss. Although the Bills weren't as dominating last year as in seasons past, they always seemed to win when it counted most—except, of course, when it *really* counted most.

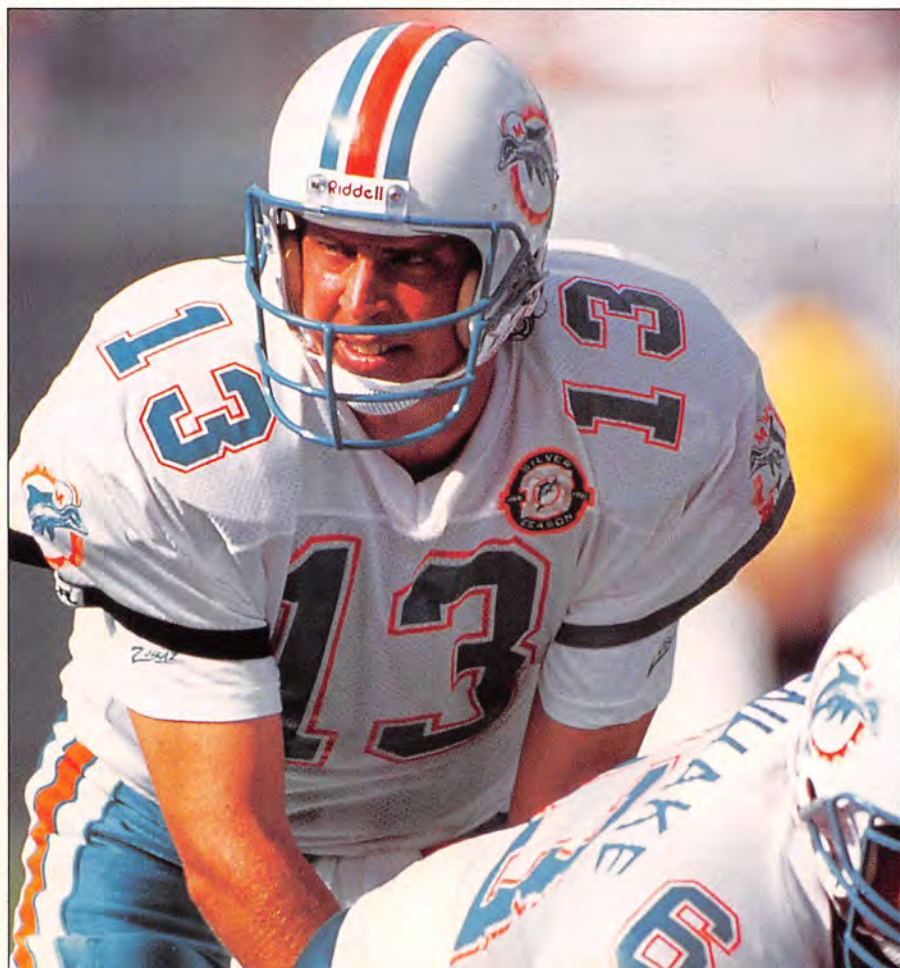
Important offseason acquisitions: None.

Important offseason departures: T Howard Ballard (Seattle); CB Nate Odomes (Seattle).

What to watch for: The Bills still are talented, but they are aging quickly. Jerry Crafts, replacing Ballard at offensive tackle, has big shoes to fill. Quarterback Jim Kelly also needs to overcome his ailments for another season.

Trumpy's analysis: Intellectually, there never has been a football team like the Buffalo Bills. They're the perfect team for everything except the Super Bowl, a

Health care is the main concern in Miami, where Marino tries to rebound.





STEVE WOLTMANN

Thomas must get his head together after a dismal January showing.

game they've lost the last four years. They still are a factor in the AFC—they're always in games they're not supposed to win, and they can never be discounted.

The concern I have for Buffalo, however, is the health of quarterback Jim Kelly, who has had problems with his knees and throwing shoulder. But Kelly has fought off injuries for the last six years.

The Bills suffered a big loss when offensive right tackle Howard (House) Ballard went to the Seattle Seahawks this off-season as a free agent. It's a monstrous loss that hasn't been talked about by a lot of people. The player taking his place, Jerry Crafts, is bigger than Ballard at 350 pounds, but he's not as good an athlete. Ballard's departure won't necessarily hurt Buffalo's pass protection, but it will hinder running back Thurman Thomas' ability to run to both the right and the left.

Thomas is entering his seventh season, and he must have the best season of his career for the Bills to be successful. He needs to rekindle the confidence his teammates and coaches once had in him. Thurman led the AFC in rushing last year with 1,315 yards and is a brilliant player, but in Super Bowl XXVIII I noticed a side of him I never had seen. I'm not one to call anybody a quitter, but his personality changed after his second fumble, and I didn't like what I saw after that. He's not the type of guy who you think would be on the sideline in the fourth quarter of a Super Bowl—but he was.

Nevertheless, the Bills are the most resilient football team I've ever encountered. They're 49-15 during the regular season in the last four years—and for three of those years, they've been coming off tremendously disappointing Super Bowl



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NOTE: Points (PTS) are based on 1993 statistics using the Ultimate Draft scoring system. Due to publishing deadlines, team designations may not reflect recent changes.

QB (01)	TEAM	GP	PTS.	QB (02)	TEAM	GP	PTS.	RB (03)	TEAM	GP	PTS.	RB (04)	TEAM	GP	PTS.	RB (05)	TEAM	GP	PTS.
1 <input type="checkbox"/> T. Aikman	DAL	14	227	1 <input type="checkbox"/> D. Bledsoe	NE	13	198	1 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Bettis	LA	16	235	1 <input type="checkbox"/> T. Allen	MIN	0	0	1 <input type="checkbox"/> M. Allen	KC	16	224
2 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Cunningham	PHI	4	81	2 <input type="checkbox"/> S. Beuerlein	PHO	14	239	2 <input type="checkbox"/> G. Brown	HOU	11	193	2 <input type="checkbox"/> M. Faulk	IND	0	0	2 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Bernstine	DEN	15	187
3 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Elway	DEN	16	327	3 <input type="checkbox"/> C. Erickson	TB	16	240	3 <input type="checkbox"/> B. Foster	PIT	9	174	3 <input type="checkbox"/> T. Kirby	MIA	16	237	3 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Brooks	WAS	16	164
4 <input type="checkbox"/> B. Favre	GB	16	274	4 <input type="checkbox"/> B. Esiason	NYJ	16	252	4 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Hampton	NYG	12	177	4 <input type="checkbox"/> E. Metcalf	CLE	16	208	4 <input type="checkbox"/> D. Brown	NO	13	127
5 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Hostetler	RAI	15	264	5 <input type="checkbox"/> J. George	ATL	12	153	5 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Johnson	NYJ	15	237	5 <input type="checkbox"/> E. Pegram	ATL	15	200	5 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Cobb	GB	12	105
6 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Kelly	BUF	16	253	6 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Mirer	SEA	16	238	6 <input type="checkbox"/> B. Sanders	DET	11	186	6 <input type="checkbox"/> L. Russell	NE	16	201	6 <input type="checkbox"/> D. Fenner	CIN	14	145
7 <input type="checkbox"/> D. Marino	MIA	5	103	7 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Montana	KC	11	170	7 <input type="checkbox"/> E. Smith	DAL	14	307	7 <input type="checkbox"/> H. Walker	PHI	16	235	7 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Harmon	SD	16	174
8 <input type="checkbox"/> W. Moon	MIN	15	286	8 <input type="checkbox"/> N. O'Donnell	PIT	16	223	8 <input type="checkbox"/> T. Thomas	BUF	16	254	8 <input type="checkbox"/> C. Warren	SEA	14	174	8 <input type="checkbox"/> A. Johnson	IND	13	144
9 <input type="checkbox"/> S. Young	SF	16	390	9 <input type="checkbox"/> P. Simms	NYG	16	216	9 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Watters	SF	13	225	9 <input type="checkbox"/> L. White	HOU	8	115	9 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Moore	PHO	15	160
REC (06)	TEAM	GP	PTS.	REC (07)	TEAM	GP	PTS.	REC (08)	TEAM	GP	PTS.	REC (09)	TEAM	GP	PTS.	KICKER (10)	TEAM	GP	PTS.
1 <input type="checkbox"/> T. Brown	RAI	16	247	1 <input type="checkbox"/> F. Barnett	PHI	4	34	1 <input type="checkbox"/> E. Givins	HOU	16	183	1 <input type="checkbox"/> B. Brooks	BUF	15	164	1 <input type="checkbox"/> M. Andersen	NO	16	117
2 <input type="checkbox"/> C. Carter	MIN	16	247	2 <input type="checkbox"/> B. Blades	SEA	16	198	2 <input type="checkbox"/> E. Green	PIT	15	187	2 <input type="checkbox"/> B. Coates	NE	16	167	2 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Carney	SD	16	124
3 <input type="checkbox"/> M. Irvin	DAL	16	264	3 <input type="checkbox"/> G. Clark	PHO	12	169	3 <input type="checkbox"/> M. Haynes	NO	15	174	3 <input type="checkbox"/> W. Davis	KC	16	185	3 <input type="checkbox"/> S. Christie	BUF	15	105
4 <input type="checkbox"/> H. Jeffries	HOU	15	177	4 <input type="checkbox"/> I. Fryar	MIA	16	195	4 <input type="checkbox"/> M. Jackson	CLE	15	166	4 <input type="checkbox"/> H. Ellard	LA	16	169	4 <input type="checkbox"/> A. Del Greco	HOU	16	126
5 <input type="checkbox"/> A. Miller	DEN	16	242	5 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Langhorne	IND	16	207	5 <input type="checkbox"/> E. Martin	NO	16	179	5 <input type="checkbox"/> C. Hawkins	TB	16	185	5 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Hanson	DET	16	130
6 <input type="checkbox"/> A. Reed	BUF	15	176	6 <input type="checkbox"/> H. Moore	DET	15	191	6 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Moore	NYJ	13	154	6 <input type="checkbox"/> M. Jackson	NYG	15	155	6 <input type="checkbox"/> C. Jacke	GB	16	128
7 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Rice	SF	16	351	7 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Proehl	PHO	16	199	7 <input type="checkbox"/> M. Pritchard	DEN	15	190	7 <input type="checkbox"/> B. Jones	SF	16	160	7 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Jaeger	RAI	15	132
8 <input type="checkbox"/> A. Rison	ATL	16	300	8 <input type="checkbox"/> S. Sharpe	DEN	16	235	8 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Taylor	SF	16	183	8 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Sanders	ATL	16	147	8 <input type="checkbox"/> E. Murray	PHI	14	122
9 <input type="checkbox"/> S. Sharpe	GB	16	306	9 <input type="checkbox"/> W. Slaughter	HOU	14	197	9 <input type="checkbox"/> C. Williams	PHI	16	193	9 <input type="checkbox"/> T. Waddle	CHI	15	105	9 <input type="checkbox"/> P. Stoyanovich	MIA	16	109

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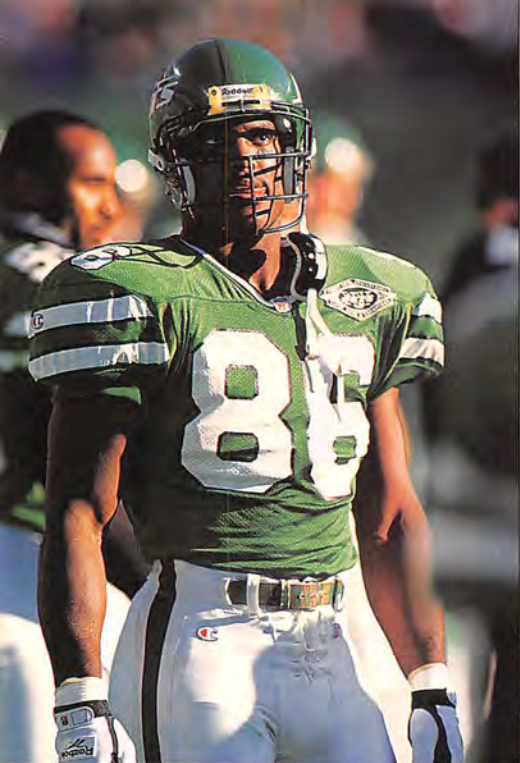
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Someone needs to fire up Mitchell's engine for the Jets to go anywhere.

losses. It's too bad that 20 years from now, we might forget how good a football team the Bills were at this time. If you separate their four Super Bowl losses from everything else they've done, their run has been truly remarkable.

New York Jets

Keys to last season: The Jets seemed ready to make some noise last year, but they withered down the stretch, losing their last three games and missing the playoffs. As a result, coach Bruce Coslet lost his job.

Important offseason acquisitions: Head coach Pete Carroll; P Brian Hansen (Cleveland); S Pat Terrell (L.A. Rams); DE Donald Evans (Pittsburgh).

Important offseason departures: Head coach Bruce Coslet (fired); TE Troy Sadowski (Cleveland); QB Browning Nagle (released).

What to watch for: The Jets must learn quickly under Carroll. Quarterback Boomer Esiason, who faded at the end of last season, must get off to a quick start to put the Jets on the right track.

Trumpy's analysis: I don't like what happened to Bruce Coslet, whose four-year tenure as coach of the Jets ended when he was fired after last season. He simply was doing the job he was told to do. I hold general manager Dick Steinberg responsible for Coslet's firing; Steinberg merely is trying to extend his stay with the Jets. And with a new coach, former Jets defensive coordinator Pete Carroll, Steinberg will get

Brown will have a big hand in New England's continued rebuilding effort.

another break. Carroll is a terrific guy, and the defense—which ranked eighth in the league last year—will be strong again, but the new coach will find things much more difficult than he did as an assistant.

At quarterback, Boomer Esiason's best years are behind him, but he's still a great player who can win games for you. Nevertheless, he's not going to make things easy for Ray Sherman, New York's new offensive coordinator. Coslet, who also acted as offensive coordinator last year, helped Esiason a lot, and I don't think the quarterback buys the reasoning for his firing, either. Plus, if Esiason is injured or gets fed up, the Jets don't have another quarterback to back him up.

Even if Carroll keeps the old system intact, there will be adjustments to make. For instance, Coslet used extremely sophisticated hand signals to operate the team's offense, which was ranked a respectable ninth in the league last year. That's a little thing, but now that Coslet is gone, who will handle those duties?

If there is one player who needs to step up his game, it's tight end Johnny Mitchell. He killed the Jets last year. For a player with a world of talent, Mitchell had just 39 catches in '93. He's an underachiever.

In New York, you're bums unless you win it all. There's no time allotted to get better—you either win or lose. However, the

game's just not that simple. The Jets were headed in the right direction last year, but now they've been thrust into another season of transition. The team now will have a new coach, a different system, and coaches in different spots. There are a lot of forces pushing on the Jets' house of cards. That dreaded word "transition" sums up the team in 1994.

New England Patriots

Keys to last season: Don't be deceived by last season's 5-11 record: This was a pretty good team by the end of '93. Under coach Bill Parcells' direction, the Patriots won their last four games, including an overtime victory over Miami in the season finale that ruined the Dolphins' playoff hopes.

Important offseason acquisitions: RB Marion Butts (San Diego); CB Ricky Reynolds (Tampa Bay); S Myron Guyton (N.Y. Giants); G Bob Kratch (N.Y. Giants).

Important offseason departures: WR Greg McMurtry (L.A. Rams); DE Brent Williams (Seattle); RB Leonard Russell (released).

What to watch for: As Bill Parcells' system takes hold and second-year quarterback Drew Bledsoe continues to get his sea legs, the Patriots should climb in the standings. Butts will add a powerful dimension to New England's offense.

Trumpy's analysis: Five years from now New England might be the best team



He never wore an earring.



What Dick Butkus did wear was Chicago top-soil. Tape on his broken fingers. And the blood of those who trespassed against him. Dick Butkus played for the love of the game not the glamour.

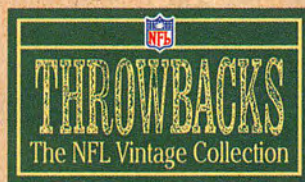
He embodied the pure passion that drove football in its glory years.

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by Team 

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in the AFC—but not yet. When they do arrive, the Patriots will be boring to watch because they'll look like the defensive-minded New York Giants that Bill Parcells led to a Super Bowl title in the 1990 season. The Patriots' greatest strength this year will be at linebacker, where Todd Collins, Vincent Brown, and rookie Willie McGinest will be featured.

Parcells has the ability to find somebody who can make an impact on the rest of the club. He rants, raves, berates, and seldom compliments his players, but he just wants them to go out there and kick the other team's butt—that's what the AFC has lacked for a long time. On offense, big, bruising Marion Butts should be Parcells' kind of player. Butts rushed for 746 yards (a 4.0 average) with the San Diego Chargers last year, and he's perfect for the Patriots—he puts welts on the opposition. New England won't throw him the ball very often; instead he'll be saved for that 30th carry of the game.

Parcells is perfect for second-year quarterback Drew Bledsoe because the coach won't put him in a position in which he has to win the game. The coach's theory at quarterback is to make sure his signal-caller doesn't lose the game. That's a good approach for a young quarterback with talent. The Patriots won't rely on Bledsoe; they'll rely on Butts, the offensive line, and

the linebackers to tear up somebody. If Bledsoe averages 30 passes a game this year, it will mean the offense isn't working. If he averages 20 passes a game, the team will do well.

New England's only weakness this season is inexperience. The Patriots simply have to stick with Parcells because he eventually will produce a winner. In five years they won't be able to build a stadium in Boston that's big enough to hold all the people who will want to watch the Patriots play.

Indianapolis Colts

Keys to last season: Without a solid running game and leadership at quarterback from Jeff George, the Colts floundered last year. Indianapolis' 189 points were the second-fewest in the league.

Important offseason acquisitions: Vice president of football operations Bill Tobin; LB Tony Bennett (Green Bay); RB Marshall Faulk (draft); QB Jim Harbaugh (Chicago).

Important offseason departures: QB Jeff George (Atlanta); WR Reggie Langhorne (released); WR Jessie Hester (L.A. Rams).

What to watch for: The Colts solved their problem at running back with No. 1 pick Faulk. With Jim Harbaugh calling the signals, however, the team still is suspect at quarterback, especially considering that Indy could have drafted Fresno State's Trent Dilfer, a potential franchise QB.

Trumpy's analysis: I'm not sure what's wrong with the Colts. With the talent they have, they should win a lot more games than they do.

A key loss for the Colts was quarterback Jeff George, who was dealt to the Atlanta Falcons this offseason. Sure, he was immature, but it's difficult to find a player who throws the ball better than George, the team's No. 1 pick in the 1990 draft. You simply can't let a player like him leave; there's too much talent in that body. And I have no confidence in George's replacement, Jim Harbaugh, who led the Chicago Bears to the league's 28th-ranked offense last season.

Marshall Faulk, the running back from San Diego State who went second in the draft, can do anything. He'll only improve a

Even with Coryatt on board, Indy's D has plenty of room for improvement.

running game that was ranked last in the league in '93. But the Colts still need somebody who can throw the ball.

On defense, linebacker Quentin Coryatt, who led the Colts with 150 tackles last season, is a great player. And the team's other first-round pick, linebacker Trev Alberts of Nebraska, will be another great one. With Jeff Herrod also at linebacker, the Colts have some top-caliber players there. Nevertheless, this defense was ranked last in the league, so improvement is needed.

Combine that with an offense that was ranked 22nd in '93, and I don't like Indianapolis' chances—especially if the Colts keep making decisions like the trade of George. The bottom line for this club: another high draft pick next spring.

AFC Central

Pittsburgh Steelers

Keys to last season: The Steelers were rolling right along in '93 until star running back Barry Foster went down with an ankle injury. Without a strong wideout corps to compensate for the loss, the Steelers never fully recovered. They lost in overtime to Kansas City 27-24 in the first round of the playoffs.

Important offseason acquisitions: FB John L. Williams (Seattle); DE Ray Seals (Tampa Bay); G Todd Kalis (Minnesota).

Important offseason departures: FB Merrill Hoge (Chicago); WR Jeff Graham (Chicago); CB D.J. Johnson (Atlanta); DE Donald Evans (N.Y. Jets).

What to watch for: If Foster and quarterback Neil O'Donnell can stay healthy, Pittsburgh's offense should click. But it's the team's defense, which is among the best in the league, that will control Pittsburgh's destiny.

Trumpy's analysis: Pittsburgh's greatest strength is its defense, which was third in the league last year. You never know where the players are going to be on the field. If you watch the Steelers on tape, it's impossible to figure out their defensive alignment.

Led by cornerback Rod Woodson, the defensive player of the year in '93, and Pro Bowl linebacker Greg Lloyd, Pittsburgh might have the fastest defense in the NFL. At all 11 spots, the Steelers simply run down the opposition.

The team's other strengths are running back Barry Foster and the offensive line. I thought the criticism Foster took for his ankle injury last year—when the running back's toughness was called into question—was completely unjustified. Before Chuck Noll retired as coach in 1991, he told me that in all his years of college and professional football, he had never come



JIM SOHRHO/BERNSTEIN ASSOC.

across a player tougher than Foster, either physically or mentally. The criticism Foster took hurt the Steelers last year.

At this point, it's difficult to know whether No. 1 pick Charles Johnson of Colorado will help Pittsburgh's receiving corps, which has been a weakness for some time. Normally a player picked in the first round to fill a need at a particular spot won't measure up to the advance publicity; no matter what Johnson does, somebody is going to say, "He's no John Stallworth or Lynn Swann."

At quarterback, I like Neil O'Donnell's toughness. Although O'Donnell was hindered by tendinitis in his throwing elbow last year, if Foster is healthy, he won't have to throw very often. Free-agent fullback John L. Williams comes in to replace the departed Merrill Hoge, and he'll be a great blocker for Foster. Somehow the Steelers need to get more out of tight end Eric Green, who had 63 receptions last year.

Pittsburgh will be a contender in 1994. Placekicker Gary Anderson, who hit 28 of 30 field goals, could win three games by himself. And the Steelers will play defense like the Steel Curtain teams of the 1970s, which just beat the hell out of the opposition.

Cleveland Browns

Keys to last season: When coach Bill Belichick released quarterback Bernie Kosar and replaced him with Vinny Testaverde, it destroyed the team's morale. After starting the year at 5-2, the Browns lost seven of their last nine games and missed the playoffs.

Important offseason acquisitions: RB Earnest Byner (Washington); CB Don Griffin (San Francisco); QB Mark Rypien (Washington).

Important offseason departures: P Brian Hansen (N.Y. Jets); LB Mike Johnson (Detroit).

What to watch for: The Browns must avoid another quarterback controversy—this time with Vinny Testaverde and Mark Rypien. Belichick's ongoing feud with the fans will provide added entertainment.

Trumpy's analysis: One thing the Browns do have is a respectable defense; coach Bill Belichick, who was defensive coordinator of the New York Giants before coming to Cleveland, always will make sure of that. Led by tackle Michael Dean Perry, Cleveland had the 12th-rated

defense in the league in '93.

The offense, however, lacks personality. Vinny Testaverde—who became Cleveland's starting quarterback amid controversy last year after longtime fan favorite Bernie Kosar was released—isn't the type of guy who can stand back there and throw the ball 40 times a game. With the offseason acquisition of former Washington Redskin Mark Rypien, there will be another quarterback controversy this year; I think Belichick will make a change and act as if it's no big deal.

That's not to say that Belichick doesn't know what's going on, but when you're losing, the quarterback sitting on the bench always looks better than the starter. I think coaches such as Belichick—guys who have spent their careers running defenses—have a tendency to change quarterbacks too often. However, while the parts are interchangeable on defense, an offense doesn't work like that. So there could be trouble on that front once again.

Cleveland's defensive front line will be its greatest strength. In the secondary, keep an eye on safety Eric Turner, who had five interceptions last season. The team's offensive front line, led by second-year center Steve Everitt, also will be solid. The 24-year-old Everitt should emerge as one of the best centers in the game; he could be the next Jim Otto.

The departure of linebacker Mike Johnson, who left for the Detroit Lions as a free agent, definitely will hurt. It's hard to understand how players such as Johnson wind up on other teams. The salary cap is supposed to solve problems, not create them, but when a player like Johnson gets away there's something wrong with the system.

The bottom line for the Browns is that they will be heartbreakers—just as they were last season, when they finished at 7-9 after a promising start.

Houston Oilers

Keys to last season: After losing four of their first five games, the Oilers won their final 11 contests and entered the playoffs as the league's hottest team. But characteristically, they unraveled in the divisional playoffs, blowing

One thing is certain about Carlson and the Oilers: They'll play in Houston.

a lead and losing 28-20 to Joe Montana and the Kansas City Chiefs.

Important offseason acquisitions: P Rich Camarillo (Arizona); TE Pat Carter (L.A. Rams); QB Sean Salisbury (Minnesota).

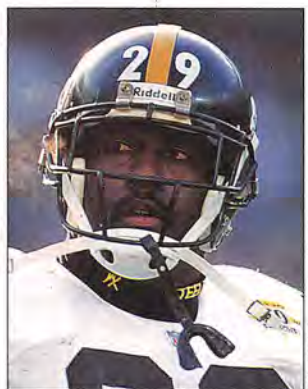
Important offseason departures: Defensive coordinator Buddy Ryan (Arizona); QB Warren Moon (Minnesota); DE William Fuller (Philadelphia); DE Sean Jones (Green Bay); P Greg Montgomery (Detroit).

What to watch for: The Oilers might have missed their last big opportunity last season. Now Houston must see what quarterback Cody Carlson can do as a replacement for Moon, and the team also must patch together its defensive line.

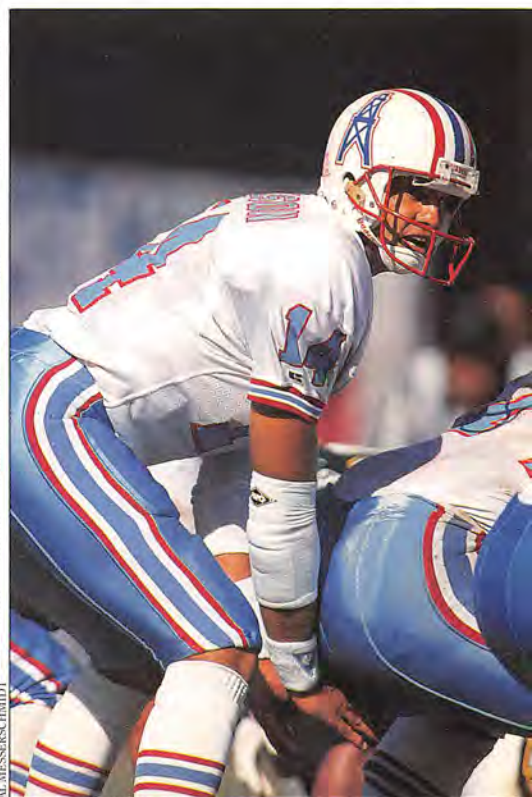
Trumpy's analysis: Until further notice, you can replace the oil derrick with a big question mark as Houston's logo. First of all, there is no way to assess quarterback Cody Carlson in relation to Warren Moon, who was traded to the Minnesota Vikings after 10 seasons with the Oilers. I don't think the team had any choice but to trade Moon. The deal had nothing to do with ability; it simply came down to money.

Nevertheless, Carlson knows how to play football, and the Oilers still have a solid offensive line. In addition, Gary Brown, who came off the bench to rush for 1,002 yards last year, is an extremely tough player.

With free-agent losses such as defensive ends William Fuller and Sean Jones, it's impossible to know what to expect from



Foster: Everybody just shut up and let him run.



the defense, either. Fuller and Jones were two great pass-rushers, and now there isn't much left of the team's defensive line.

Then the Oilers lost defensive coordinator Buddy Ryan, who accepted the head coaching position with the Arizona Cardinals. Listening to some of Ryan's players describe him, it's as if they're talking about the Lord. Oilers center Bruce Matthews, one of the toughest players in the game, told me last year, "Every day at training camp the defense went full-tilt. It was like we were playing the Los Angeles Raiders in the 15th week of the season. They just beat the living crap out of us down after down." The effect of Ryan's departure is incalculable because now the pressure is back on the offense to produce the yards and the points.

If the Bills are the AFC's most resilient team, the Oilers are the conference's prime candidates for the psychiatrist's couch. This team is impossible to figure out, and I think the Oilers know it. Again, there simply are no answers.

Cincinnati Bengals

Keys to last season: Simply put, the Bengals were poor in almost every facet of the game, ranking 27th on offense and 16th on defense. They didn't win until their 11th game of the season.

Important offseason acquisitions: G Darrick Brilz (Seattle); S Louis Oliver (Miami).

Important offseason departures: None.

What to watch for: With the addition of defensive tackle Dan Wilkinson, the first overall pick in the 1994 draft, Cincinnati's defense will only get better. Wilkinson and second-year defensive tackle John Copeland form the foundation of what eventually could be one of the best defensive fronts in the game.



Wilkinson: A Big Daddy for a line with big potential.

Trumpy's analysis: This team will ride entirely on the shoulders of quarterback David Klingler. When Klingler, the Bengals' No. 1 pick in 1992, came out of the University of Houston, he was completely undisciplined, with a wonderful arm but very poor mechanics. First quarterback

coach Ken Anderson tried to teach him; then head coach David Shula tried; and now the Bengals have a new offensive coordinator, Bruce Coslet, trying to show him how to be an NFL quarterback.

If Klingler, who threw more interceptions (nine) than touchdowns (six) last year, doesn't grow up in a hurry, Cincinnati will have wasted a high first-round draft pick and a lot of hours. I do know, however, that Klingler has spent a lot of time in Cincinnati this offseason trying to get himself straightened out. If his work pays off, and if running back Harold Green can get back on track—he dropped from 1,170 yards in '92 to just 589 last year—the Bengals might have some offensive punch. Anything would be an improvement over last year, when Cincinnati's offense ranked 27th in the league.

The Bengals picked up free-agent safety Louis Oliver in the offseason, but it remains to be seen what kind of impact he'll have. The team, which is switching to a 4-3 front this year, definitely will be strong at linebacker, where Steve Tovar and Ricardo McDonald will be two of the featured players.

If Ohio State defensive tackle Dan Wilkinson, the No. 1 overall pick, can play low and capitalize on his strength, opponents simply will have to find someplace else to run the ball. Wilkinson reminds me of Seattle's Cortez Kennedy; teams can't mess with him.

But the key for Cincinnati is Klingler. The Bengals can't go anywhere without him.

AFC West

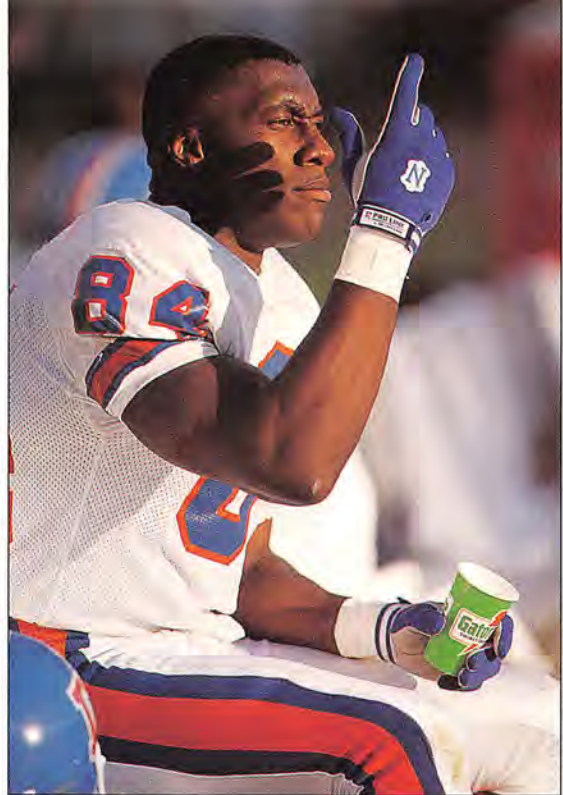
Denver Broncos

Keys to last season: Quarterback John Elway, running back Rod Bernstein, and tight end Shannon Sharpe made for a lethal offensive trio, but the defense, which ranked 19th in the league, lagged behind, and the Broncos were bumped in the first round by the Raiders' high-powered attack.

Important offseason acquisitions: WR Anthony Miller (San Diego); WR Mike Pritchard (Atlanta); CB Ray Crockett (Detroit).

Important offseason departures: CB Tyrone Braxton (Miami); WR Vance Johnson (San Diego).

What to watch for: If the defense can do



Even with Sharpe already around, Denver made pointed improvements in the receiving corps.

even an average job, Denver will go a long way. The addition of receivers Miller and Pritchard has given Denver the most complete offense in the AFC.

Trumpy's analysis: This attack will be unbelievable. In receivers Mike Pritchard and Anthony Miller, the Broncos have the two best acquisitions of the offseason. Miller, who had 84 catches for the Chargers last year, instantly gives the Broncos a big-play receiver. And they already had one in tight end Shannon Sharpe, who came up with 81 receptions in '93.

The additions should make John Elway even better. Never in my life have I seen another quarterback do what Elway does with a football. He has to be the most difficult quarterback in the NFL to play against. He can run full-speed to his left and unleash a pass to his right. I'll put him up against any quarterback from the last 50 years. He's just so much fun to watch.

Running back Rod Bernstein, who rushed for 816 yards last season, rounds out the offense. With Bernstein, Elway, and their fleet of receivers, you'll never know what the Broncos are going to do next. What's more, getting tackle Gary Zimmerman from the Minnesota Vikings last year—which cost Denver a first-round pick in the '94 draft—was a smart move. Zimmerman will give Elway additional protection.

The defense, which was ranked 19th in '93, might be a problem. The Broncos do have dynamite safeties in Steve Atwater



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and Dennis Smith, but the departure of cornerback Tyrone Braxton could hurt. I also like linebacker Simon Fletcher (13.5 sacks last year) and end Dan Williams, who was the team's No. 1 pick in '93. Williams is a big guy (290 pounds) who has the potential to really help the defense if he can come back from the knee injury he suffered last season.

As always, Elway is the real strength of this team. If he stays healthy, the Broncos will be in the hunt for the NFL title.

Los Angeles Raiders

Keys to last season: The Raiders had a dominant defense last season, but the lack of a running game prevented them from being a complete team. They made it to the divisional playoffs, which was about as far as they deserved to go.

Important offseason acquisitions: RB Harvey Williams (Kansas City); G Kevin Gogan (Dallas); CB Albert Lewis (Kansas City).

Important offseason departures: TE Ethan Horton (Washington); DE Howie Long (retirement).

What to watch for: The story remains the same for the Raiders this year: They need a solid running game. Whether either Williams or rookie Calvin Jones is the answer remains to be seen. The defense received a boost when the Raiders picked up free agent Lewis.

Trumpy's analysis: The Raiders' big strength is their defensive line. Even with the retirement of end Howie Long, the Raiders have a lot of different players who can do a lot of different things.

Defensive tackle Chester McGlockton, the team's first-round pick in 1992, is indescribable. This guy takes 320-pound players and just throws them out of his way. The Raiders also have end Anthony Smith and tackle Nolan Harrison, both of whom can play football. In addition, L.A. might have the best safety tandem in the league with Eddie Anderson and Derrick Hoskins. Cornerback Terry McDaniel, who had five interceptions last year, delivers even more punch to the defensive backfield.

The team's greatest weakness—one that has existed seemingly since Ted

Hendricks hung 'em up—is at linebacker. In fact, the Raiders used three draft choices this year on the linebacker position, including No. 1 pick Rob Fredrickson of Michigan State.

On offense, running back Harvey Williams, picked up from the Chiefs in the offseason, is a heartbreaker; an absolute heartbreaker. It's amazing to watch Williams—all 230 pounds of him—run through the line of scrimmage in practice, but then something happens to him during the games. He broke Marty Schottenheimer's heart in Kansas City; the Chiefs wanted him to be their man at running back.

The Raiders definitely need someone in the backfield, and rookie Calvin Jones of Nebraska is extremely tough and smart. He rushed for more than 1,000 yards last year in the Big Eight, and considering how big some of the defens-

es are in that conference, that was quite an accomplishment.

The Raiders' best receiver last year was James Jett, who averaged 23.4 yards per reception. He'll catch the ball over the middle, catch the ball deep, and even do some blocking. He's going to be an amazing player. I hope receiver Tim Brown doesn't become the Marcus Allen of his generation—a guy whom owner Al Davis signs to a big contract (Brown inked a \$10 million pact this offseason), gets mad at because of the large contract, then puts in the doghouse. That would be a shame, because Brown can play. In fact, the entire receiving corps is talented.

Jeff Hostetler probably is the toughest quarterback in the NFL. He's the type of player who gets everything possible out of a football team. But the Raiders have no running game—and that will hurt.

Kansas City Chiefs

Keys to last season: Guided by feisty veterans Joe Montana and Marcus Allen, Kansas City won the division title for the first time since 1968 and advanced to the AFC Championship Game.

Important offseason acquisitions:

QB Steve Bono (San Francisco); DT Tony Casillas (Dallas); CB Mark Collins (N.Y. Giants).

Important offseason departures:

CB Albert Lewis (L.A. Raiders); CB Kevin Ross (Atlanta); LB Lonnie Marts (Tampa Bay).

What to watch for: With Lewis and Ross gone, free-agent pickup Collins must take command of the defensive backfield. Montana and Allen also need a repeat of '93, although it's doubtful they'll be able to get back to that level.

Trumpy's analysis: I'm scared to death of what might happen to Joe Montana this year. He's 38 years old, and he should not be playing anymore. When Montana was younger, he would have just walked back to the huddle after the hit that put him out of last year's AFC Championship Game, a 30-13 loss to Buffalo.

I don't want to see Joe go out of the game on his back. I want him to leave football standing up—not necessarily as a winner in his final year, but standing up. The first order of business when teams play the Chiefs this year will be to get Montana out of the game, and it won't take much. I do, however, like offseason acquisition Steve Bono, who was Montana's backup with the San Francisco 49ers. He has a great arm and is capable of running the offense.

Running back also is a question mark for Kansas City. The Chiefs can't give the ball to Marcus Allen 200 times again this season. Plus, the team got rid of Harvey



BOB ROSATO

Montana isn't the retiring type—but maybe he should be this year.

Williams, who is now with the Los Angeles Raiders. But the Chiefs did take Texas A&M running back Greg Hill with their first-round pick in the draft.

This team still has a great defense—the front seven might be the best in the conference. Linebacker Derrick Thomas is wonderful; Neil Smith, who led the NFL with 15 sacks last year, is a great player; and tackle Joe Phillips is a load.

Those players will help make up for the mistakes in the defensive backfield—which could be numerous given the departures of Lewis and Ross. Those two losses will hurt, but Marty Schottenheimer is the type of coach who builds his team like a pyramid. The strength up front compensates for potential weaknesses in back. In fact, Schottenheimer uses that strategy both on offense and defense. He also has a strong offensive line. Tim Grunhard is one of the better centers in the game.

But the story this year in Kansas City will be Montana. At some point, you have to say, "I've got all the money I need. I want to be able to lift up my kids when I'm 45. Let's get out of here."

Seattle Seahawks

Keys to last season: Guided by rookie quarterback Rick Mirer and running back Chris Warren, the Seahawks won four more games last year than they did the previous season.

They also improved their scoring output from 140 points in '92 to 280 last year.

Important offseason acquisitions: T Howard Ballard (Buffalo); CB Nate Odomes (Buffalo).

Important offseason departures: T Andy Heck (Chicago); FB John L. Williams (Pittsburgh); G Darrick Brilz (Cincinnati).

What to watch for: It will be a long and slow climb, but Seattle is on its way up. Mirer showed last year that he has the potential to be one of the game's best quarterbacks, and with the addition of offensive tackle "House" Ballard, Seattle's offense should continue to blossom.

Trumpy's analysis: In his third year back on the sidelines, it looks like Tom Flores will try to build the same type of team he had when he was with the Raiders from 1979 to 1987. And all he did with them was win two Super Bowl titles.

On offense, Brian Blades, who had 80 catches and three touchdowns last year, is a great receiver who is capable of getting deep. Led by Chris Warren—who registered his second straight 1,000-yard season in '93—and Jon Vaughn, Seattle also has a strong running game. And with the addition of former Buffalo Bills tackle House Ballard, the team will put a better-than-average offensive line on the field in '94.

Then there's second-year quarterback Rick Mirer. He has the potential to be everything you need in a quarterback. From what I understand, he's a very disciplined player who will listen to coaches and work his butt off. Rookie quarterbacks always remember their mistakes more than their successes—that's probably their biggest burden, but it also can be their greatest asset. Mirer is no different.

Linebacker Rufus Porter is unbelievable as a pass-rusher. He just never seems to stop; he's always in somebody's face. Free safety Eugene Robinson is another wonderful player. Nobody knows about him—except the offensive coordinators in the NFL. Meanwhile, Cortez Kennedy is the best defensive tackle in the AFC, maybe in the league.

I think one of Seattle's problems is—and always will be—how far the team has to travel to play. The Seahawks log more miles than any other club in the league. In some instances the team has to fly out of Seattle late Friday night in order to get to the game site for a Saturday workout. There's just no way to dodge the travel factor; Seattle always is going to have some bad games on the road. The club was just 2-6 outside the Kingdome last year.

For the Seahawks to be successful, they need more players who can complement Kennedy on defense.

San Diego Chargers

Keys to last season: After the Chargers won the AFC West in 1992, hopes were high entering last season. But the team fizzled and never was able to get back on track after a three-game losing streak early in the year.

Important offseason acquisitions: WR Vance Johnson (Denver).

Important offseason departures: QB John Friesz (Washington); WR Anthony Miller (Denver); WR Nate Lewis (L.A. Rams); LB Gary Plummer (San Francisco); RB Marion Butts (New England); DE Burt Grossman (Philadelphia).

What to watch for: San Diego just might be the first victim of the new era of free agency and the salary cap. Stripped of most of their best talent, the Chargers will have a difficult time competing this season.

Trumpy's analysis: Who's left on this team? Among the Chargers' offseason



Natrone means business, but with all the talent that's been sent packing, do his bosses?

departures are John Friesz, Anthony Miller, Marion Butts, and Gary Plummer. What's more, they lost running back Rod Bernstine last year.

Quarterback Stan Humphries is a blue-collar player who will hang out with his offensive linemen. He's a tough athlete who plays hurt and would go through a wall to get a win. But without the likes of Miller and Bernstine around him, he doesn't have much of a supporting cast.

Running back Natrone Means, who rushed for 645 yards (4.0 average) last year as a rookie, could be one hell of a player. But without Butts' help, I don't know if he can stand the banging that comes from carrying the ball 28 or 30 times per game.

San Diego's defense still is very active. Junior Seau is one of the treasures of the NFL. The Chargers also have solid players in linemen Leslie O'Neal and Chris Mims.

But this team is a long way from where it was in 1992, when the Chargers won the division with an 11-5 record—a long way. They've been destroyed by free agency. When people such as Bernstine, Miller, and Butts leave, as a player you start asking yourself, "What have we got left, and where do we go from here?"

It hurts your psyche more than anything else. And the result is that you start thinking, "Oh man, we're going to get our butts kicked." The Chargers could do some serious losing this year. ■

BOB TRUMPY worked with associate editor WILLIAM WAGNER on this article.

By GREG GARBBER

AS BRUCE ARMSTRONG picks his way through a formidable mound of shrimp salad, he tries to explain something that's not easily put into words—specifically, what has happened here in Foxboro, Mass., over the last year. How, exactly, did the New England Patriots pull off a radical, 180-degree turnaround and become a credible football team?

Armstrong shrugs, and the one-karat diamond in his left ear glints. The 285-pound offensive tackle is as amazed as anyone, but he's still a bit of a skeptic. Seven seasons with this basket case of a franchise will do that to you.

"I'm not the oldest player on this team," says Armstrong, who will be 29 in early September. "But, believe it or not, I've got tenure now. Me. Here longer than anyone else, now that Tip [linebacker Andre Tippett] has retired. The turnover rate has been unbelievable. And it's not just the players. I was drafted in 1987, and since I've been here there have been four coaches, three owners. The personnel? You can't keep up with it.

"Nobody wants to admit it, but in the last few years, when adversity reared its ugly head you'd catch yourself saying, 'Here we

go again.' That had to be cut out—like cancer, almost."

Armstrong is leading up to something. He leans closer. "You can see it from the outside looking in, and let me tell you, I can see it from the inside looking out," he says. "I see this team on an upswing after being down for so many years. We'll be as good, maybe, as any team in the league."

The New England Patriots? The franchise that brought you the adventures of Lisa Olson, Victor Kiam, and Irving Fryar? The same Patriots whose perennial mismanagement could serve as a negative case study for the nearby Harvard Business School? As good as any team in the league?

It could happen—maybe not this year, but soon. The Patriots started last season in familiar fashion by losing 11 of 12 games, and then something strange happened. Actually, the Patriots happened: They won their last four games in a blur, capping the run by eliminating the Miami Dolphins from the playoffs in the season finale.

The turnaround began when New England hired Bill Parcells as coach before the 1993 season. In eight seasons with the New York Giants Parcells won 85 games and two Super Bowls. He left the Giants in 1991, after the second title, when his overtaxed heart complained. Two seasons of regaining his health while undertaking somewhat less taxing work as a football analyst for NBC, and Parcells was ready to return to the sidelines.

Last year's 5-11 record and the Patriots' fast finish has New England buzzing. Season-ticket sales, which crested at

29,000 a year ago, were above 40,000 by the end of spring. The 42 luxury boxes at Foxboro Stadium are sold out for the first time in history. The team that reached Super Bowl XX with a memorable 1985 season is expected to reach that grand plateau again in the near future.

"My expectations are higher than they were last year—much higher," Parcells says. "I'm going to be more demanding, a lot tougher on them. And you know what? Their expectations are higher this year." Adds inside linebacker Vincent Brown, the linchpin of the defense: "Our goal isn't not to be laughed at anymore. Our goal is to get to the Super Bowl."

The new owner certainly is optimistic, and he'd better be, given his whopping investment. Robert Kraft paid \$170 million for the Patriots. That's the highest franchise price in NFL history—too much, many people believe—but Kraft is undaunted.

"I'm pumped," says Kraft, a Patriots season-ticket holder since 1972. "We have one of the best coaches in the history of the game, in my opinion. We opened up the checkbook for him and gave him the resources he needed. We have a chance to sell all the seats this year.

"Things are looking really, really good. But I don't want to jinx myself."

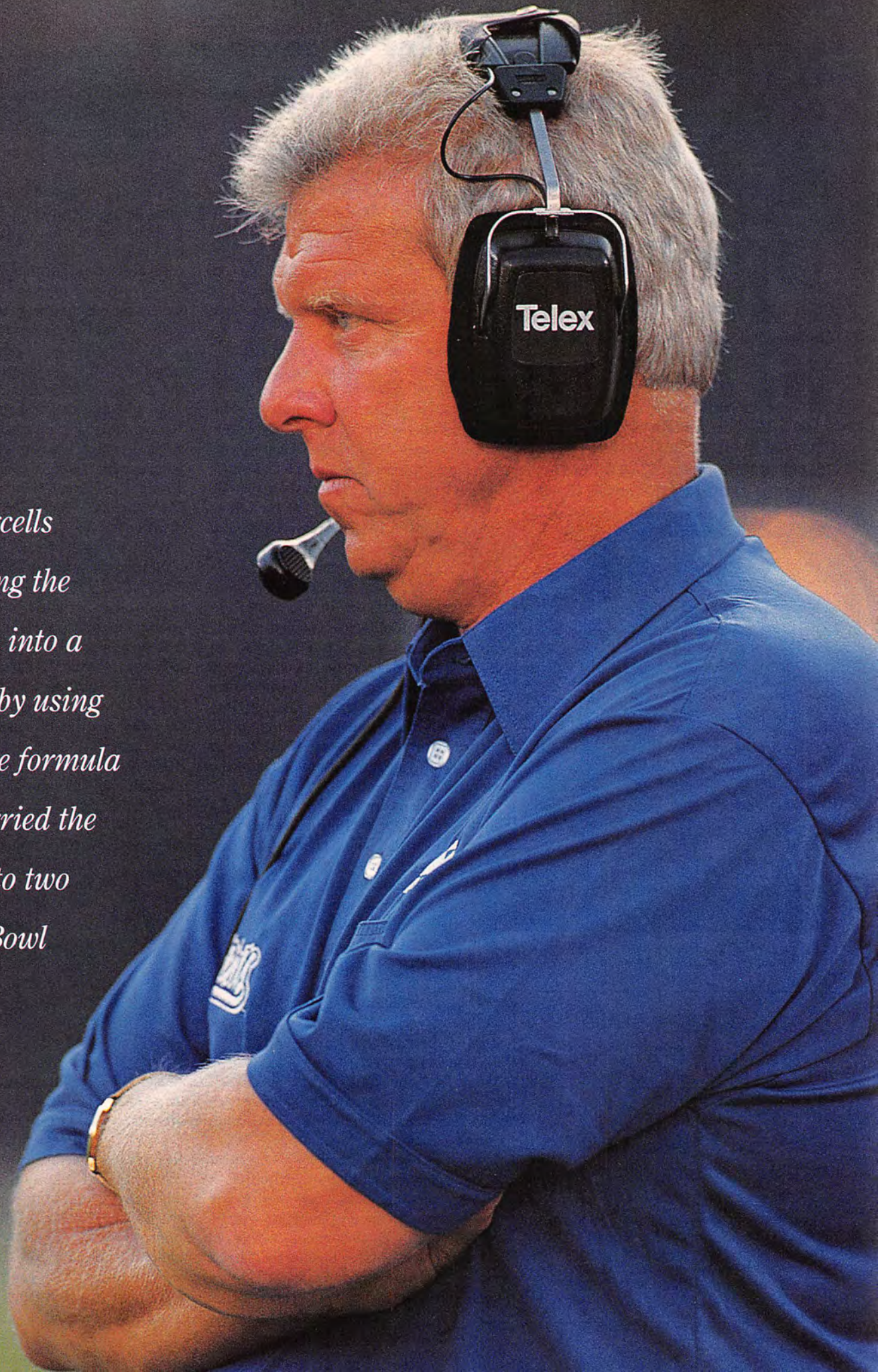
And so, on the record, Kraft talks in terms of incremental improvement. Privately, though, he's thinking playoffs. And considering the Patriots' soft fourth-place schedule—which includes games against the Cincinnati Bengals, Indianapolis Colts (twice), and Cleveland Browns—some NFL experts are thinking the same thing. Even Kevin Mannix, the sardonic *Boston Herald* scribe, has been converted. Against his better instincts, he



BOB ROSATO

Soph on the hot seat: "I know there's no more free ride," says Bledsoe.

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#172

believes these former Patsies could win 10 games this year.

Parcells is walking through the Patriots offices, cutting a wide swath, when he sees a familiar face—someone who chronicled his eight-season tour of duty with the Giants day by day. The coach is told he looks good.

"I feel good," says Parcells, with the conviction of a man who has put major heart surgery behind him. "What are you doing here?"

Parcells is told that a certain national sports magazine is putting together a feature that will celebrate the wonder of the Patriots. He grimaces and utters a word even national sports magazines can't print. "The wonder of the Patriots," Parcells says in a mocking tone. "Isn't that a bit strong?"

Maybe not, when you consider that 4-0 run to end the season and the franchise's good fortune in the ensuing offseason. If Kraft hadn't intervened at the last minute, the Patriots might not be playing in Foxboro this season. Former owner James Orthwein, a member of the Anheuser-Busch board of directors, wanted to bring his team home with him to St. Louis but ran into all kinds of legal and political problems. Suspense novelist Tom Clancy and a handful of glittering friends, Paul Newman and Tom Selleck among them, then made Orthwein an offer that would have moved the Pats to Hartford—an offer Orthwein came close to accepting.

The coaches dreaded the prospect of a move, and there was no guarantee that Parcells, who had built a house in Foxboro, would have followed the team to a new locale. Kraft's purchase not only spared Parcells the inconvenience of relocation, but gave him a longtime Patriots fan as a boss.

Orthwein brought Parcells to New England and signed quarterback Drew Bledsoe to a lucrative contract. But he balked at springing for any marquee free agents. For Parcells, the team's inability to land meaningful mercenaries in the league's first year of free agency was a source of irritation.

After juggling some assets, new owner Kraft agreed to spend the money—some \$13 million, by his reckoning—to bring in talent. "I'm in a lot of businesses," Kraft says, "and there is always a strategic moment when you can act. This was the

time to act. You go get the players, you meet them more than halfway, maybe, to get them signed and in here working.

"This was a one-year opportunity to upgrade through the draft and free agency. We had to move."

Parcells wasted no time luring to New England two players he coached with the Giants, guard Bob Kratch and safety Myron Guyton. Kratch brings stability to an offensive line that is suddenly deep in talent on both sides of center. Guyton steps in at a vulnerable position that was patrolled last year by rookie Corwin Brown. The Patriots then snagged Tampa Bay cornerback Ricky Reynolds, another blue-chip starter.

With the fourth overall pick in this year's draft, Parcells selected Willie McGinest of USC, a 6'4", 255-pound defensive end whom the Pats plan to move to outside linebacker. Comparisons to another Parcells protégé, Lawrence Taylor, immediately ensued; while McGinest's numbers as a senior—68 tackles, 13 for losses, and six sacks—weren't extraordinary, the Patriots liked the way the Trojans moved him all over the field. Kraft quickly signed his No. 1 selection to a four-year, \$6.1 million deal, guaranteeing the top pick's presence on the first day of training camp.

The Patriots also sent a big message—248 pounds worth, actually—to unhappy running back Leonard Russell. A free agent, Russell was asking for \$2 million a year. Instead, Parcells worked a trade with the San Diego Chargers to bring in big, bruising Marion Butts. So long, Russell. Butts is a prototypical back for Parcells' power game, and he's likely to register between 200 and 250 carries this season.

That's five new impact players added to a young

lineup that was competitive in every game except one last year. And there were new contracts for important veterans such as Armstrong. "The way things have been engineered, the key players have been signed for the next three or four years," Armstrong says. "Mr. Kraft has invested a lot of money, which leads me to believe



Kraft: Seizing the "strategic moment."

DAVID SILVERMAN (6)





LT II? Rookie linebacker McGinest can attack from all over the field.

that this is not going to be a fly-by-night thing."

Last season, when asked about his defense, Parcells responded, "At least I've got Vincent Brown." Now, with Guyton, Reynolds, McGinest, and the emergence of third-year players Todd Collins and Dwayne Sabb, the unit, which ranked 13th in the league last year, should be much better. "We hope this can be one of the dominant defenses of the 1990s," says Brown, a standout linebacker. "Last year we were young, and we played a lot of zone. This year, with the players we have, we'll take more chances to put more pressure on the quarterback."

Parcells managed to collect a few more folks from his Giants days to join the New England coaching staff. Mike Pope, who coached Mark Bavaro when he was with the Giants, was lured from Cincinnati. Maurice Carthon, who as fullback escorted Joe Morris in New York's glory days of the mid-'80s, gives Parcells 10 former Giants on a staff of 12 assistants.

"When you have this many guys who have been together, it has to help you," says Parker, who was the Giants strength coach for seven of Parcells' eight seasons with the team. "We are all committed, personally and from a coaching standpoint, to his way of constructing a team and running it. We think it's the right way."

"You build a program with a certain set of values and a continuity of teaching. We're doing that again."

The Patriots also handled the potentially difficult Tippet situation with uncharacteristic delicacy. Instead of waiving or cutting

INSIDE SPORTS

TOP 20 through June 19

RANK	NAME	CITY	PTS
1	Michael Lese	Phoenixville, PA	2,373
2	Laura Devlin	Brattleboro, VT	2,373
3	Dan Kooima Jr.	Jenison, MI	2,363
4	Jim Shannon	St. Catharines, ON	2,357
5	Peter Grossman	San Carlos, CA	2,354
6	Ruth Binder	Vancouver, BC	2,346
7	Thomas Finnerty	Hoboken, NJ	2,342
8	George Frank	Grayslake, IL	2,340
9	Michael Cannivet	Buffalo Grove, IL	2,339
10	Diggins O'Farrell	New Glasgow, NS	2,338
11	Carol Porter	San Carlos, CA	2,331
12	Howard Nieman	Maywood, IL	2,331



RANK	NAME	CITY	PTS
13	Ray Krawchuk	Ajax, ON	2,329
14	Daniel Poposki	Lorain, OH	2,326
15	Mason Brock Jr.	Richmond, VA	2,326
16	Vernon Welton	Dartmouth, NS	2,325
17	Randy Carther	Yuba City, CA	2,324
18	Lee Hulman	San Mateo, CA	2,324
19	Peter Grossman	San Carlos, CA	2,324
20	Larry Smith	Glendale, AZ	2,322

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May 23 - 29

		Pts	Prize
Vito Tassielli	Dearborn, MI	240	\$150
Phillip Chimino	Orland Park, IL	240	\$100
Michelle Dennis	Petersburg, OH	239	\$50

May 30 - June 5

		Pts	Prize
James Torre	Phoenix, AZ	239	\$150
Andrew Skloff	Philadelphia, PA	239	\$100
Michael Hansen	Cadyville, NY	234	\$50

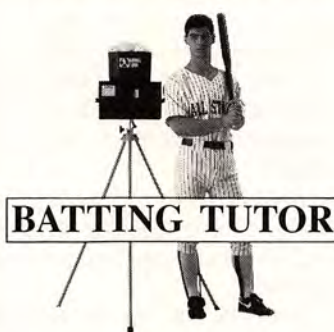
June 6 - 12

		Pts	Prize
Charles Seymour	Lansing, MI	281	\$150
Edward Estopinan	Rivervale, NJ	270	\$100
Daniel Reynolds	Allagany, NY	266	\$50

June 13 - June 19

		Pts	Prize
John Cole	Eugene, OR	287	\$150
Jason Patterson	Louisville, KY	280	\$100
John Fullerton	Pugwash, NS	279	\$50

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the salary of the high-priced veteran linebacker, the team moved him into the front office. Tippet thus retired gracefully at the age of 34, with an even 100 career sacks. It was the first front-office hire of a prominent player in franchise history.

Those four victories to end the season overshadowed the Patriots' steady improvement over the course of last year. New England lost eight games by six points or fewer and six by not more than three points—two of those coming in overtime, to the Detroit Lions and Buffalo Bills. With consistent place-kicking—rookie Scott Sisson hit just 14 of 26 field goal attempts before being replaced by Matt Bahr—the Patriots probably would have been a .500 club last year.

Overall, the Patriots allowed 77 fewer points in 1993 than they had in '92. The run defense, a telling statistic, averaged 185 yards-allowed over the first four losses but just 85 yards-allowed over the last four.

Even with Bledsoe starting at quarterback and another rookie, Vincent Brisby, at wide receiver, the Patriots scored 33 more points than they did the year before. The running game flourished as the offensive line came together, and sacks dropped dramatically—only the Jets allowed fewer sacks than the Patriots' 23. Parcells' conservative maximum-protection scheme kept Bledsoe's psyche intact by allowing him to get decked only 16 times.

Considering the pressure he bore, Bledsoe had a very creditable rookie season. Although he fell one pass short of completing 50% of his attempts, he finished with 15 touchdowns and 15 interceptions. For comparison, Seattle Seahawks rookie Rick Mirer, the Notre Dame quarterback who was drafted immediately after Bledsoe, threw 12 TDs and 17 interceptions. Bledsoe's marks also surpass those of other notable quarterbacks in their rookie seasons. Terry Bradshaw threw just six touchdowns and 24 interceptions as a rookie; John Elway seven TDs and 14 interceptions; Troy Aikman nine TDs, 18 interceptions; and Randall Cunningham one TD, 8 interceptions.

In Bledsoe's 1993 preseason home debut against Green Bay, a series of three plays suggested the rookie's great potential. The first was a sizzling laser to Greg McMurtry, thrown perfectly through a thicket of defenders, that moved the ball to

the Packers' 18-yard line with 26 seconds left in the first half. The second was a heady spike of the ball to stop the clock. The third was a silky parabola that



Kratch [left] and Guyton, two former Giants, were glad to rejoin Parcells in New England.



dropped softly into the hands of Brisby, inches beyond the reach of the Packers defender, for a touchdown that tied a game the Patriots eventually would win.

Still, there were times when he misread coverages, hurried his passes, and generally acted like a rookie. Against the Pittsburgh Steelers, for instance, Bledsoe threw five interceptions in the second half and was stopped at the goal line as time ran out in a 17-14 loss.

Parcells seemed to ride Bledsoe pretty hard at times last season and says he will turn up the heat even more this year. "If he's acting like a confused rookie again, the last few weeks of the season didn't mean anything," Parcells says. "I'm going to put more pressure on him. It's 'do it' time."

Bledsoe sighs when he hears those words. "There definitely was a grace period," he says. "Now I know there's no more free ride."

Over the last four games, the Patriots defense and the rookie quarterback offered a glimmer of what the future could be. Sure, the wins came against the Cincinnati Bengals, Cleveland Browns, Indianapolis Colts, and the Miami Dolphins without Dan Marino or John Offerdahl, but for this hard-luck franchise those victories were a sign.

"We'd work hard every week, play hard, and then lose," Armstrong says. "It got

tough when you'd have nothing to show for it. But then we started winning. And once you start winning, it's very addictive. It makes the game—it makes everything—fun again. For me, it was a cure-all."

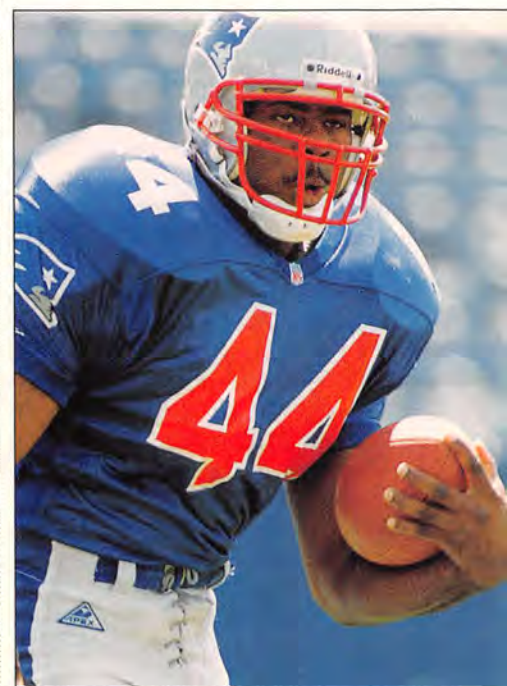
For the Patriots and their long-suffering fans, it was a revelation.

One of the reasons Parcells is so relaxed heading into the 1994 season is that there are no more questions about who is in charge here. This, after all, is the man who was nearly fired by Giants general manager George Young in 1983 after going 3-12-1 in his rookie season.

In New England, there is no one down the hall who has veto power over Parcells' moves. All football decisions go through him, and him alone. And Parcells runs a tighter ship at Foxboro, too. Taylor always lived by a different set of rules with the Giants, but no one in a Patriots uniform approaches LT's magnitude. Parcells is the real star, and as long as he wins, Kraft will give him all the slack he wants.

"He's a handful, that's for sure," Kraft says. "But most capable people are unique in terms of style. Bill and I have grown fairly close since I bought the team. He's a strong character, but he has delivered. He has brought an excitement to this area."

If the Patriots sell out their home games, Kraft has plans to add 3,000 club seats and 50 luxury boxes at Foxboro Stadium. And the fans aren't the only ones excited. Parker, the strength coach, notes a statistic that will take on added significance as the



As the featured back, Butts should be merry in the Patriots' power game.

games mount: 43 of the team's 52 players (the four kickers aren't considered bona fide players) participated in the team's off-season conditioning program.

"There has been so little positive associated with this franchise, but the players coming in have a more positive attitude," Parker says. "They're investing in themselves in the weight room. When you have that level of commitment, it's a little harder to say, 'Same old Patriots. Same old deal.' The players have more at stake."

And a pressure of a different kind. "This year there are expectations to live up to, on the part of the fans and the media," Bledsoe says. "We have those expectations, too, now. We're trying to temper those expectations, because we have a long way to go, but you have to admit the potential is there for us to be a good team."

Parcells, for his part, has little use for the term "potential" and its connotations of improvement down the road. He's a quintessential "now" guy. Likewise, he says history is meaningless. Maybe, maybe not.

In a recent poll, the New England Sports Museum asked fans which current Boston area big-league coach or manager they had the most confidence in. Keep in mind that the Patriots always have been the No. 4 team in Boston's four-team market. In the poll, Celtics coach Chris Ford received 5% of the vote, Red Sox manager Butch Hobson weighed in at 11%, and Bruins chief Brian Sutter got 19%. Parcells collected 65% of the vote.

"People walk up and say, 'If you can just pick up where you left off.' I tell them, 'Get that idea out of your head,'" Parcells says. "Picking up where you left off never, ever works."

"You go back to where you were and start where you started last time. The idea is to keep everything the same, then accelerate through it faster than you did the time before, like we didn't at the start of last season."

Parcells is relaxed, speaking deliberately. "I'm not under any illusions about this team. We've got a lot to prove, a lot to do. But I know three things: We've got more quality players. We're in exceptional condition. And we've got a good attitude."

It's a formula for success Parcells knows well. He assiduously avoids being drawn into comparing these young Patriots to the old Giants and their championship seasons. This year, though, the comparisons will be unavoidable.

Watching this team grow, you get the idea that it's going to happen again. And it's not a question of if, but when. ■



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THE 1994 COLLEGE FOOTBALL season hasn't even kicked off yet, and already it's getting a bad name. We keep hearing about how there are no great Heisman Trophy candidates this year, about how the best players have left for the pros before they had a chance to reach their peak.

Nonsense. There are a number of outstanding Heisman candidates out there, perhaps more than in any season in recent memory. This year's prospects may not be as well known as some of players who left early for the NFL, such as former Tennessee quarterback Heath Shuler, now with the Washington Redskins, or multiple

We offer suggestions aimed at ensuring that the Heisman Trophy finally goes to the worthiest player

By ALLEN BARRA

threat David Palmer of Alabama, who will be suiting up for the Minnesota Vikings rather than the Crimson Tide in '94. But that just means that this season voters will have to do a little more than just check out the weekly statistics in *USA Today*.

And while they're doing their homework, we'd like to suggest at least an attempt to adopt some common-sense standards in the voting. Over the past few decades the awarding of the Heisman has become increasingly anticlimactic, the result less of play on the field than of public relations off it. Is there anyone out there who in hindsight still would argue in favor of Ty Detmer, Andre Ware, Desmond Howard, or Gino Torretta?

With luck, 1994 will be remembered as the year Heisman voters finally started to use their heads. To help them along, here are a few simple suggestions:

1. Let's consider giving two Heismans—one for offense and one for defense. When asked why the Downtown Athletic Club doesn't do so, a representative of that august body, which hands out the trophy, replied: "It would diminish the importance of the award." We beg to differ: It would *increase* its meaning. Stop pretending defensive players have a fair chance to win this thing—since no one-way defensive player ever has.

2. Let's start looking at what oppo-

nents these guys compile their numbers against. We're tired of hearing rationalizations for players who ring up huge totals against second-rate opposition, and we're tired of apologists who claim, "You're discriminating against players from WAC teams," or whatever. Those teams have as much obligation to schedule big-time opponents as anyone else does, and there's absolutely no reason to reward them if they don't.

3. Let's stop rewarding players for

Here are the regular-season totals for two top college quarterbacks from 1993. See if you can tell which one wrapped up the Heisman midway through the season and which one never was in serious contention. Just for fun, we'll throw in the numbers of a third guy you may have heard of.

Player	Comp.	Atts.	Yds.	Yds./Att.	TDs	Ints.
A.....	264	380	3,032	8.0	27	4
B.....	222	363	3,397	9.4	25	10
C.....	233	386	3,454	8.9	27	11

If You're Gonna Do It, Do It Right

piling up meaningless numbers. Stop giving a player headlines for throwing nine touchdown passes against New Mexico Junior Tech when the game already was well in hand after two or three. In other words, let's consider the quality of statistics, instead of mere quantity.

For instance, a quarterback who passes for, say, 3,880 yards and 29 touchdowns may not have had as good a year as a passer who had just 2,550 yards and 20 TDs. The second guy might have had a higher yards-per-pass average (the most important single measure of passing efficiency because it correlates with winning better than any other stat) and a better interception percentage but simply left the games early rather than staying in and piling up meaningless numbers in blowouts. Let's stop punishing the player whose coach shows a little sportsmanship; if instead we reward that quality, it might become a habit.

4. Let's stop making our selections before the season is over. In fact, let's include the bowl games. Why not?

We know the suspense is killing you, so: "A" is Charlie Ward of Florida State, the 1993 Heisman winner; "B" is Glenn Foley of Boston College last year; and "C" is a BC quarterback you may have heard of named Doug Flutie, in 1984, the year he won the award.

Now, for the life of us we can't figure out how everyone decided about midway through the '93 season that Ward was a lock for the Heisman. Yes, he was the best all-around athlete, but that doesn't necessarily mean he was the best football player. Foley threw fewer passes but gained substantially more yards, and while Ward did have six fewer interceptions, Foley had to play catch-up much more. Ward also played a tougher schedule, but Foley had much less talent around him.

We're not saying Ward didn't deserve the Heisman last year. We're saying that if the voters had waited to make up their minds until after Boston College beat Notre Dame—if you remember, just a week after Ward's team *lost* to the Irish—they might have come to a different conclusion. (And



BRUCE L. SCHWARTZMAN

by the way, there's no statistical evidence that Flutie had a better season the year he won the Heisman than Foley did last season, but we didn't hear anyone make a very strong case for Foley in '93.)

Here's an alphabetical list of players who should make a case for themselves this year:

Dave Barr, QB, senior, California

According to the NCAA's system for rating quarterback efficiency, Barr was the leading passer in the country in '93 among those who return to college action this fall. Yes, the ratings can be misleading because they overemphasize the completely irrelevant statistic of pass completion percentage, but Barr is damn good no matter how you look at it. Last year the Golden Bears were unbeaten in games he started and 0-4 in those he missed or those in which he was slowed by injuries. If Barr learns to stay in the pocket he could have a sensational senior season, but he's going to have to be at his best to shine among an unusually good crop of quarterbacks.

Lee Becton, RB, senior, Notre Dame
Becton is a very good

The traditional bias against defenders gives Wheatley [above] and Becton [right] a huge Heisman edge over FSU's Brooks [below].

football player, probably one of the best college players in the country, but would anyone contend right now that he's *the* best collegian in the land, which is whom the Heisman Trophy is supposed to go to? Nevertheless, if Notre Dame chose to make Becton the Heisman winner, it would be a fairly easy matter.

Start with Becton's obvious talent—he rushed for more than 100 yards in six games last season, then piled up 138 against Texas A&M in the Cotton Bowl. Add the exposure Notre Dame's national



TOM DI PACE

TV contract with NBC gives the Irish in comparison to other teams, which voters may catch only once or twice this year—if at all. Then consider that Notre Dame almost certainly will win 10 or possibly even 11 games just by showing up. Given all that, if Irish coach Lou Holtz wanted to he could hand Becton the ball 30 times a game, no matter what the score, and at Becton's career average of better than five yards per rush, he could gain almost...well, you get the idea.

Holtz won't do that, of course; Notre Dame tradition dictates dividing up the yards. (Isn't it astonishing that Becton is only the fifth player in Notre Dame history to rush for more than 1,000 yards in a season? Some prominent schools have that many 1,000-yard rushers in a decade.) Thus Becton probably won't get the Heisman even if he's good enough to—and even though he probably is a better player than some of those who have won the award in the past two decades.



JONATHAN DANIEL/ALLSPORT

Derrick Brooks, LB, senior, Florida State

If you're considering one defensive player before the season starts, how about a consensus All-American from the defending national champions who opted to return for his senior year? Injuries limited Brooks' action in the second half of the season, but you'd have to have a short memory to forget his performance over the first five games of 1993, when he *single-handedly* outscored Seminoles opponents 18 to 14.



TOM DI PACE

A losing season in Georgia would sink Zeier [above]; Nebraska's system handicaps Frazier [right], no matter how well he operates it.

In case you missed the highlights, he returned two interceptions for scores and took a fumble back 83 yards for another. He also blocked a punt, which allowed a teammate to score a touchdown.

Despite the lost time, Brooks still recorded 47 solo tackles last year, seven for losses. (And you thought defensive players didn't have statistics.) Brooks would shine even more if his coaches let him roam from his outside linebacker position to play more as a roverback.

Terry Dean, QB, senior, Florida, and Danny Wuerffel, QB, sophomore, Florida

If you mention how good Florida's quarterbacks are year in and year out, you'll often get a reply along the lines of, "Well, that's just the system they use." The system? What the hell does that mean? That Florida quarterbacks are mediocre players who only look good because of coach Steve Spurrier? If his system creates such wonderful quarterbacks, why doesn't everybody use it?

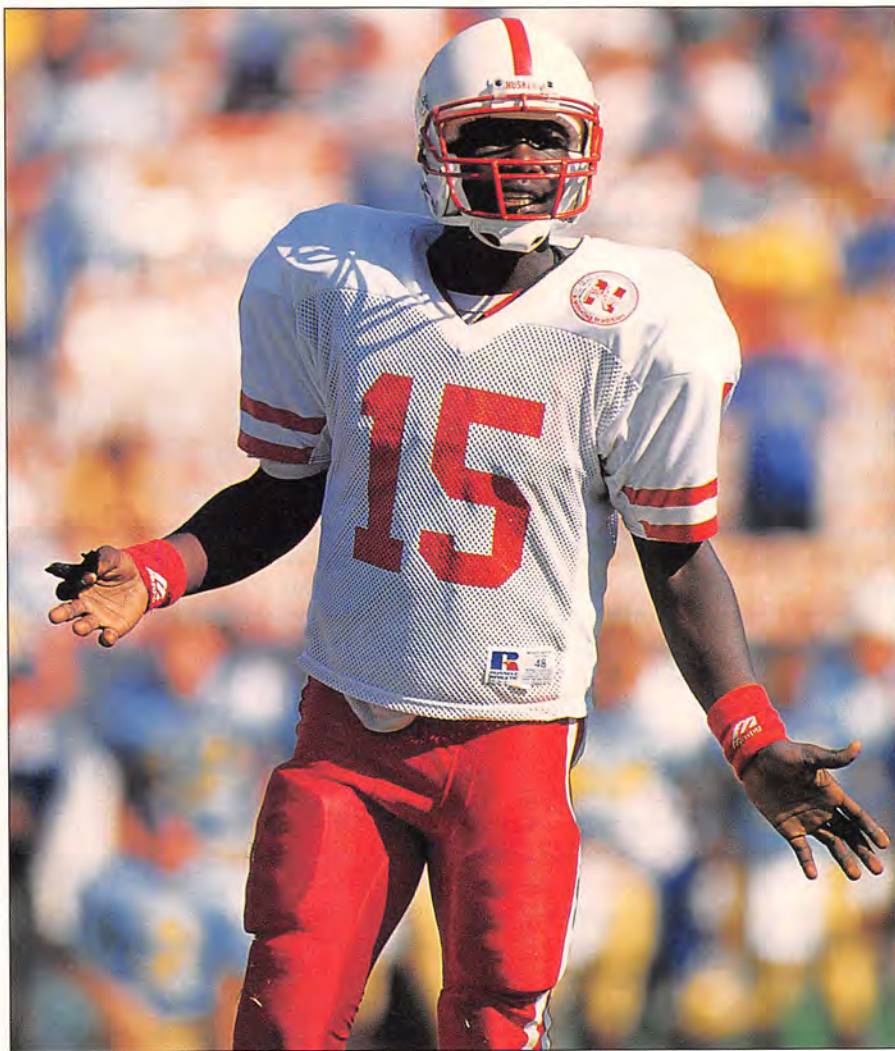
Spurrier is a great coach who knows how to spot excellent passers and coach them so that they get the absolute most out of their ability. Last year Dean and Wuerffel combined to throw the ball 473 times for 3,884 yards—that's 8.2 yards a pop—and 39 touchdowns. Their touch-

down-to-interception ratio was better than two-to-one. These are absolutely awesome numbers—no single quarterback in the nation approached that combined performance—and even more impressive, those stats were compiled against a schedule that included Auburn (11-0) and Florida State (11-1). If the Gators give primary playing time to one of these guys this season, he probably will be the most deserving Heisman Trophy candidate in the country.

interceptions and just one TD. A win against one highly ranked club this year would bolster his stock considerably.

Tommie Frazier, QB, junior, Nebraska

Run-pass quarterbacks such as Frazier usually get the shaft in the Heisman voting—sometimes you get the impression that voters are electing the top pro prospect rather than the best college player. However, Frazier is a first-rate college quarterback: a fine runner (704 yards, sec-



AL MESSERSCHMIDT

Maurice DeShazo, QB, senior, Virginia Tech

Not too many people seem to know about DeShazo, let alone consider him a Heisman prospect, but it's amazing so many highly intelligent people could have overlooked such a terrific player: Last year DeShazo passed for 2,080 yards on just 230 passes—his average of more than nine yards per attempt was much better than Ward's 8.0 mark—and he tossed 22 touchdowns against just seven interceptions. Part of the problem is that DeShazo really hasn't shown up against the big boys—in games vs. Miami and Boston College, the two best teams he faced, he threw three

ond-best on the team, with nine touchdowns) and a serviceable passer (just 77 completions in 162 attempts, but for 1,159 yards, a healthy seven-plus yards per pass). He also plays well in big games: If you thought he was the best quarterback in the 1994 Orange Bowl, you'd get little argument from the Florida State defense.

Frankly, we don't give a damn whether Frazier is NFL material or not. If he's the best this year, he deserves the trophy.

Joey Galloway, WR, senior, Ohio State

Galloway may be the best wide receiver in Buckeyes history. (Of course, it's hard to

produce great receivers with the kind of quarterbacks Ohio State traditionally trots out.) He had a sensational 1993 season, with 47 catches for 946 yards and 11 touchdowns, along with nine rushes for 58 yards and two TDs. His average of 20.4 yards per catch was much better than Desmond Howard's mark the year Howard won the Heisman.

Chad May, QB, senior, Kansas State

With the possible exception of DeShazo, May is the best unknown player in the country—but by unknown we mean to the national sports media, not to the teams he played against. Overall, May's stats don't look quite as impressive as DeShazo's, but there is one significant difference: This guy beat Oklahoma, tied Colorado, and put up 28 points against Nebraska, big-time opponents all. If the Wildcats go 8-2-1 or better, May will deserve serious consideration.

Steve Stenstrom, QB, senior, Stanford

If we went purely on merit, Stenstrom would be at the top of our list for the 1994 season. His 1993 numbers were fantastic: 300 completions in 455 attempts for 3,627 yards, 8.0 yards per attempt, 27 touchdowns, and 14 interceptions. You could make a strong case that he had a better season than Ward did: Put Ward on Stanford last year, and it's doubtful the team would have done better than its 4-7 mark, but combine Stenstrom with FSU's talent, and the Seminoles would have beaten Notre Dame. Stanford should improve to about 8-3, and it really ought to be remembered that Stenstrom's schedule was the toughest in the country last year and is likely to be this year as well. They say he isn't a "classic" passer, just smart and resourceful—but didn't we used to hear the same thing about another quarterback who came to greatness under Bill Walsh?

J.J. Stokes, WR, senior, UCLA

Like Galloway, Stokes benefits from the fact that the prejudice Heisman voters once seemed to have against receivers has evaporated. He finished seventh in the balloting in '93; none of the six players ahead of him last year returns in '94.

However, your estimation of Stokes' 1993 performance depends on how you interpret the statistics. Last season he had 82 catches for 1,181 yards and 17 touchdowns—

impressive stats, but a team can boost the numbers of a particular receiver simply by throwing the ball to him more often than it does to his teammates. No single receiver Stokes played against last year had numbers comparable to his, but at the end of the season UCLA as a team had completed 197 passes for 2,398 yards and a 12.2 average, while its opponents completed 201 for 2,410 yards and a 12.0 average. It's really a question of how the passes were distributed; even with Stokes, UCLA's passing game was no better than that of its opponents.

Yards per catch is the single most important statistic a receiver can be measured by, and Stokes' mark was just 14.4 last year. That's not particularly impressive; a wide receiver should average about 20 to be considered Heisman material. Stokes may be the best player in the country at his position—maybe UCLA throws too many short, possession passes to him and doesn't send him downfield enough—but he shouldn't be considered the leading wide



OTTO GREILE/ALL SPORT



Kansas State's May [left] shows up in the big games, but stat-happy Heisman voters are more likely to go ga-ga over UCLA's Stokes [above].

tacular performances in big games: 192 yards in 32 carries against Penn State, and 146 yards on 25 tries vs. Notre Dame. Wheatley may have to average 200 yards a game just to get some respect.

Eric Zeier, QB, senior, Georgia

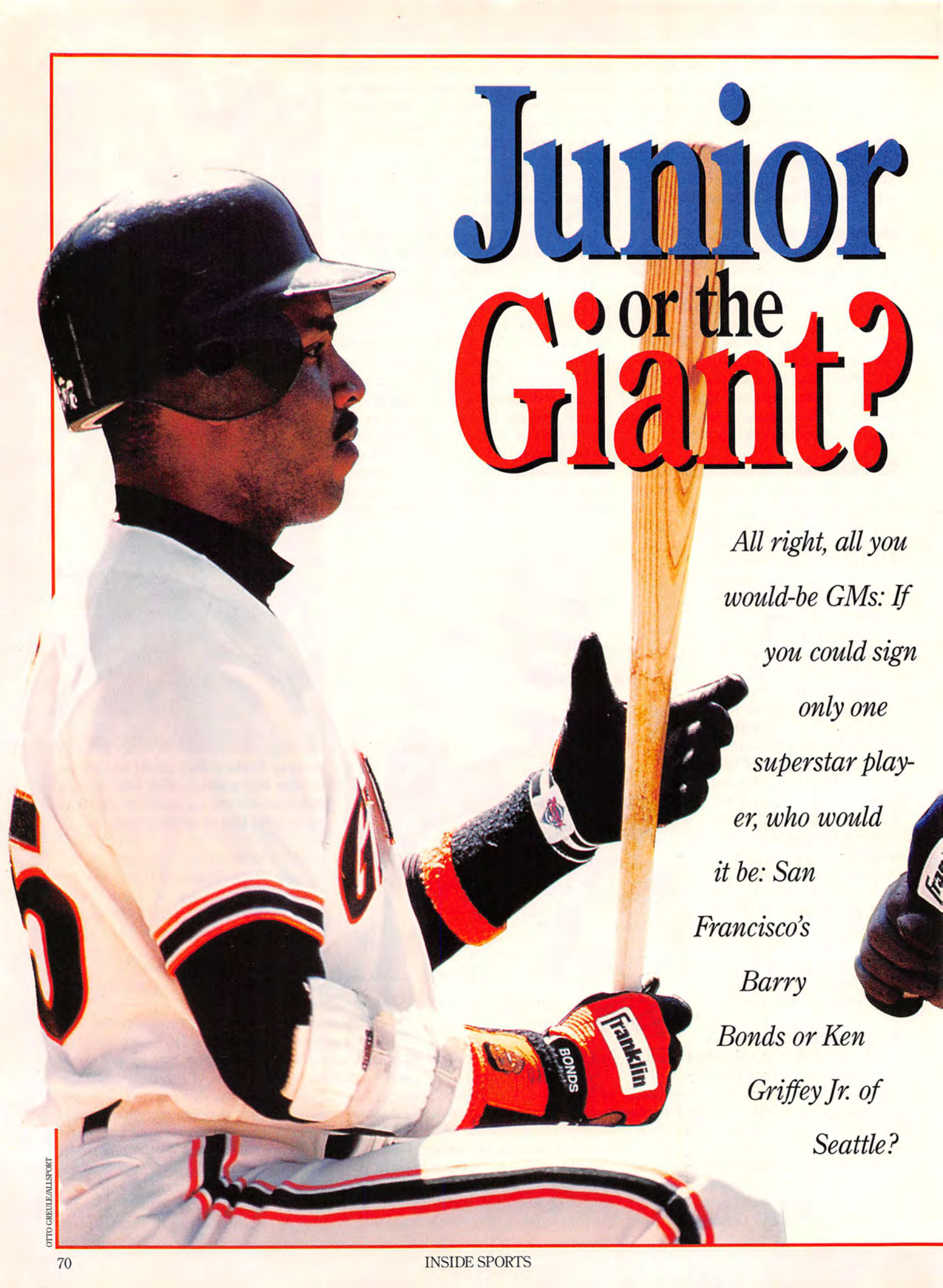
If the Heisman were awarded simply on individual merit, Zeier would have been one of the top two or three candidates in the country last year. He passed for 3,525 yards, and his 8.3-yard average per throw was three-tenths of a yard better than Ward's. In addition, Zeier threw 24 TD passes against just seven interceptions, which is pretty amazing considering how often Georgia's defense forced the offense to come from behind. We suspect Zeier is the best college passer in the country, but Georgia must improve on its 5-6 record from '93 for him to have a Heisman hope. ■

receiver candidate on the basis of last year's numbers.

Tyrone Wheatley, RB, senior, Michigan

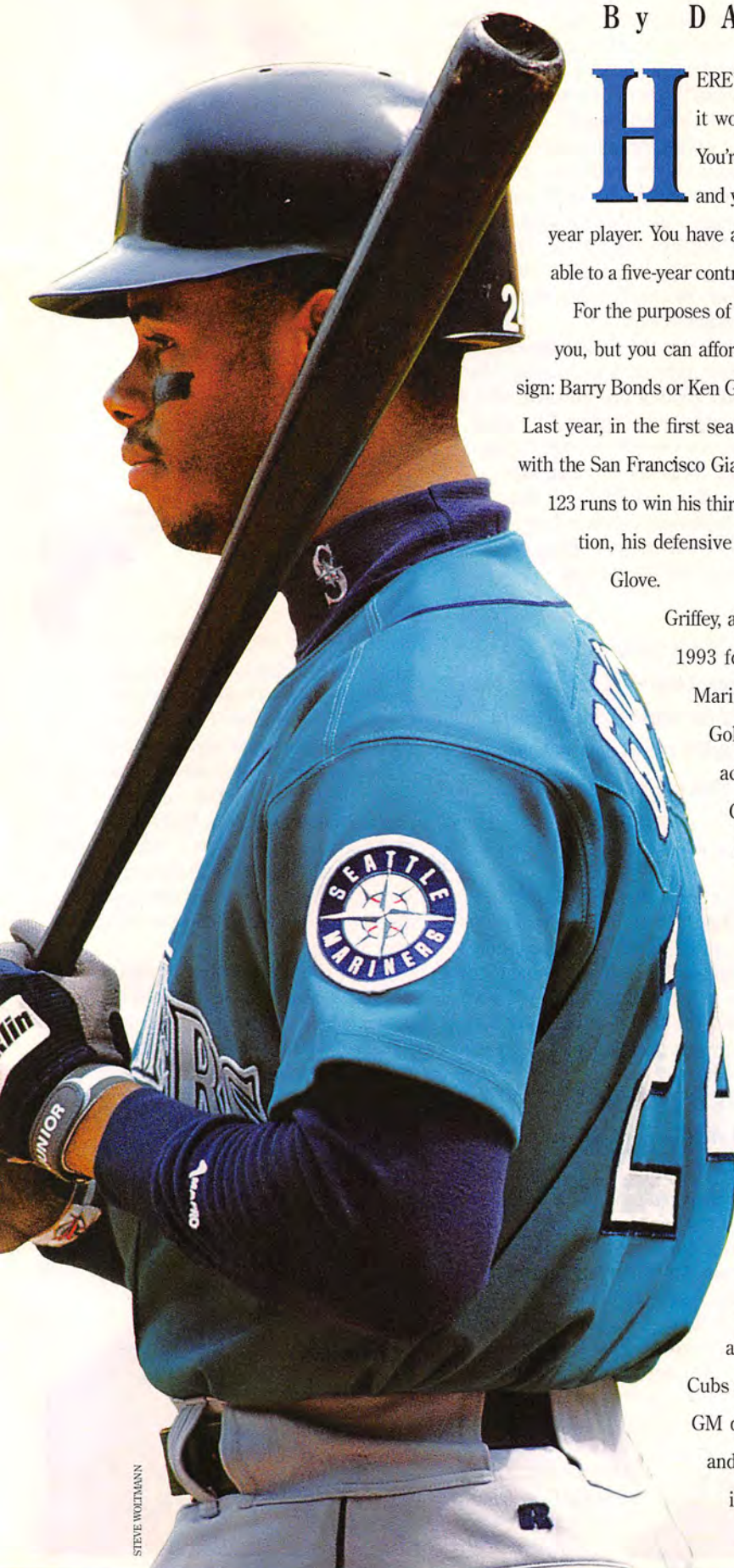
Howard's Heisman a couple years ago probably hurts Wheatley's chances this year—voters seem reluctant to grant two Heismans in one decade to any school that isn't the University of Southern California. Probably the best running back in the nation last season, Wheatley received curiously little support in the Heisman balloting (he placed eighth) despite some spec-

JOHN WILLIAMSON



Junior or the Giant?

*All right, all you
would-be GMs: If
you could sign
only one
superstar play-
er, who would
it be: San
Francisco's
Barry
Bonds or Ken
Griffey Jr. of
Seattle?*



By DAVE NIGHTINGALE

HERE'S THE PREMISE—AND ONE OF THESE SEASONS it won't seem as much like a fairy tale as it might today: You're the general manager of a major league baseball team, and you're preparing to create the sport's first \$10 million-a-year player. You have at your disposal \$50 million to sign the best guy available to a five-year contract.

For the purposes of this hypothetical discussion, all players are available to you, but you can afford to ink only one to a big-bucks deal. So who do you sign: Barry Bonds or Ken Griffey Jr.?

Last year, in the first season of his six-year, \$43.75 million free-agent contract with the San Francisco Giants, Bonds batted .336, hit 46 home runs, and drove in 123 runs to win his third National League most valuable player award. In addition, his defensive work in left field earned him a fourth straight Gold Glove.

Griffey, a.k.a. "Junior," hit .309 with 45 homers and 109 RBIs in 1993 for American League non-contender Seattle. The Mariners center fielder also collected his fourth straight Gold Glove last season. What's more, both are sons of accomplished major-leaguers—Bobby Bonds and Ken Griffey Sr., respectively—and obviously have learned much from their fathers.

What to do? Well, if you believe INSIDE SPORTS' panel of experts, the decision would be to sign Griffey—but it was a close call. How close? Oh, say, the thickness of a birth certificate. Now that's a truly paper-thin margin.

The judges' panel for our discussion included Hall of Fame outfielder Billy Williams, now the hitting instructor for the Chicago Cubs; former big-league manager Buck Rodgers, who has had to face both players—Bonds from 1989 to 1991, when Rodgers managed the Montreal Expos and Bonds played for the Pittsburgh Pirates, and Griffey as skipper of the California Angels until this spring; Cubs assistant general manager Syd Thrift, who was Pirates GM during Bonds' first three major league seasons there; and Seattle manager Lou Piniella, who pencils Griffey into his Mariners lineup each day, but who as Cincinnati Reds manager from 1990 to 1992

STEVE WOLTMANN

spent three years trying to figure out how to stop Bonds.

On the surface, some of the panelists might seem biased, and maybe they are. But you'll be impressed by how they go out of their way to eliminate much of that bias just by being honest.

Barry and Junior were rated in five categories, each on a 10-point scale. And when those category ratings failed to produce a winner, we resorted to a tiebreaker.

Hitting

There's a mutual admiration society here, of sorts.

Bonds says he's in awe of Junior's newfound power, a component that was missing from Griffey's game prior to 1993. Griffey averaged just 22 homers in his first four big-league seasons before more than doubling that figure last year—and then making a run at Roger Maris' single-season record through the first four months of this season.

Griffey says any comparison between himself and Bonds as batters is difficult. "I'm taller and have a more erect stance," he says. "Barry crouches and then uncoils. Boy, can he uncoil! So we're completely different as hitters—and I guess as people, too."

Bonds got off to a slow start this season, but he has hit .310 over the past four years and has averaged 35 homers and 114 RBIs in that span.

"There's no question that Bonds is the better hitter, based on the last four years," Rodgers says. Adds Thrift: "Barry has ungodly opposite-field power; he can hit the ball over any fence in any park. Three of his first five homers in [Pittsburgh's] Three Rivers Stadium as a rookie in 1986 were over the left field fence."

As for Griffey, Piniella says: "Junior is unique as a player; offhand, he doesn't remind me of anyone out of the past. As a hitter, though, I guess I'd think of him as a bigger, stronger version of Tony Oliva. The total package? Well, I guess I'd have to say the only person he reminds me of is...uh...Barry Bonds."

Thrift believes the similarities extend to the mental approach to hitting. "Both Bonds and Griffey are blessed with a superior awareness system," he says. "They can see everything that's going on and can focus on what they have to do in a given situation, just like Michael Jordan used to do in basketball. When they're at the plate, Barry and Junior can

Bonds has been the more consistent hitter over the past few seasons, but Griffey's impressive recent power explosion has narrowed the gap dramatically.

put their brains in the highest state, the 'alpha' state. It's a sort of euphoric situation—just you and the other thing—the ball, in this instance—"and nothing else. When a hitter reaches the alpha state, the ball always looks bigger, and the pitch always looks slower as it comes to the plate."

□ Rating: Bonds 10, Griffey 9.

Speed/Quickness

Neither Bonds nor Griffey has reached his maximum potential as a base-stealer, largely owing to their managers' choices.

However, even Griffey concedes that Bonds might have a slight edge if both suddenly decided to attempt to become another Rickey Henderson or Lou Brock. In fact, with Bonds' power, the 40-40 mark Jose Canseco first cracked with 42 homers and 40 thefts in 1988 is well within reach. "Barry easily is capable of 50 steals a season if the

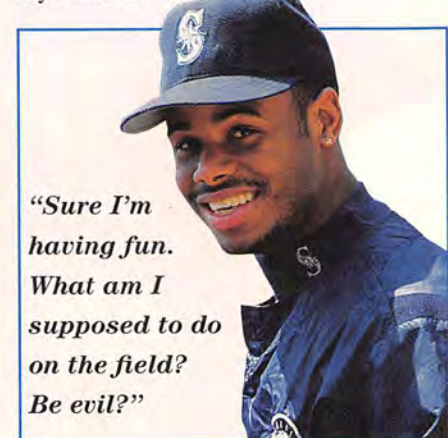


JEFF CARLICK

Giants ever decide to turn him loose on the basepaths," says Thrift. "There's no way in the world he shouldn't be able to match Canseco—if they give him the chance."

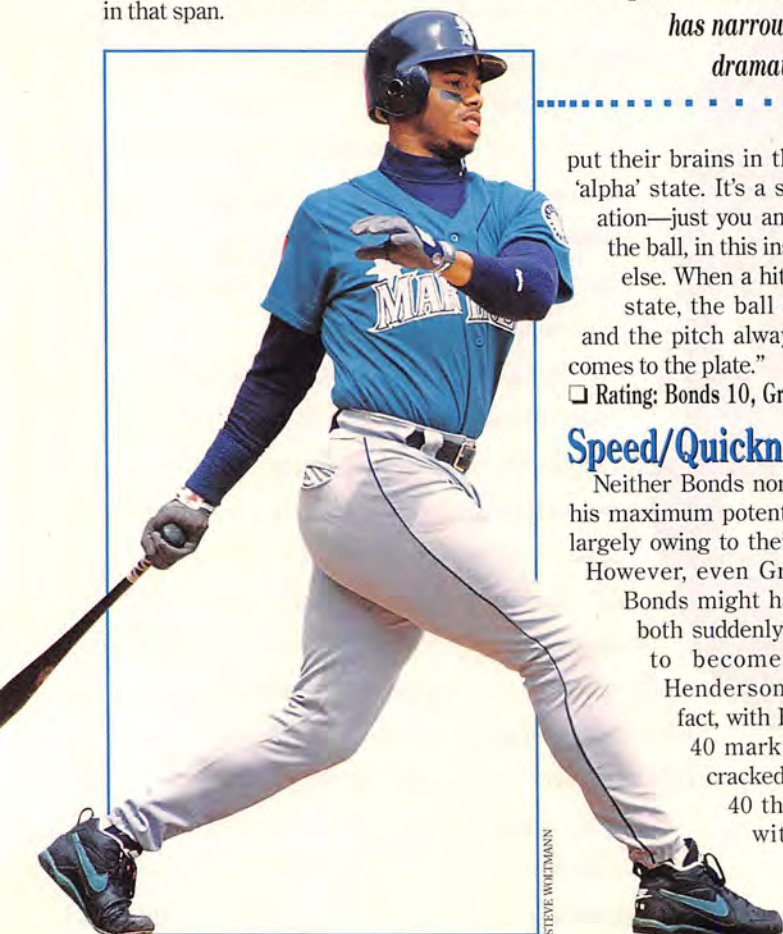
For his part, Griffey was slimmer than usual when he showed up for spring training this year—to help himself become more of a complete player. "Junior finally wised up and lost 15 to 20 pounds over the winter, which should make him even faster and shouldn't have any effect on his power," says Rodgers.

As for the relationship of swiftness to defense, Griffey has textbook speed for a center fielder. Bonds, though he plays left, is equally fast. "When it comes to covering ground, especially in foul territory in some of those big National League parks, Bonds is the best left fielder I've ever seen, with the possible exception of Rickey Henderson," says Piniella.



"Sure I'm having fun. What am I supposed to do on the field? Be evil?"

STEVE WOLTMANN



STEVE WOLTMANN

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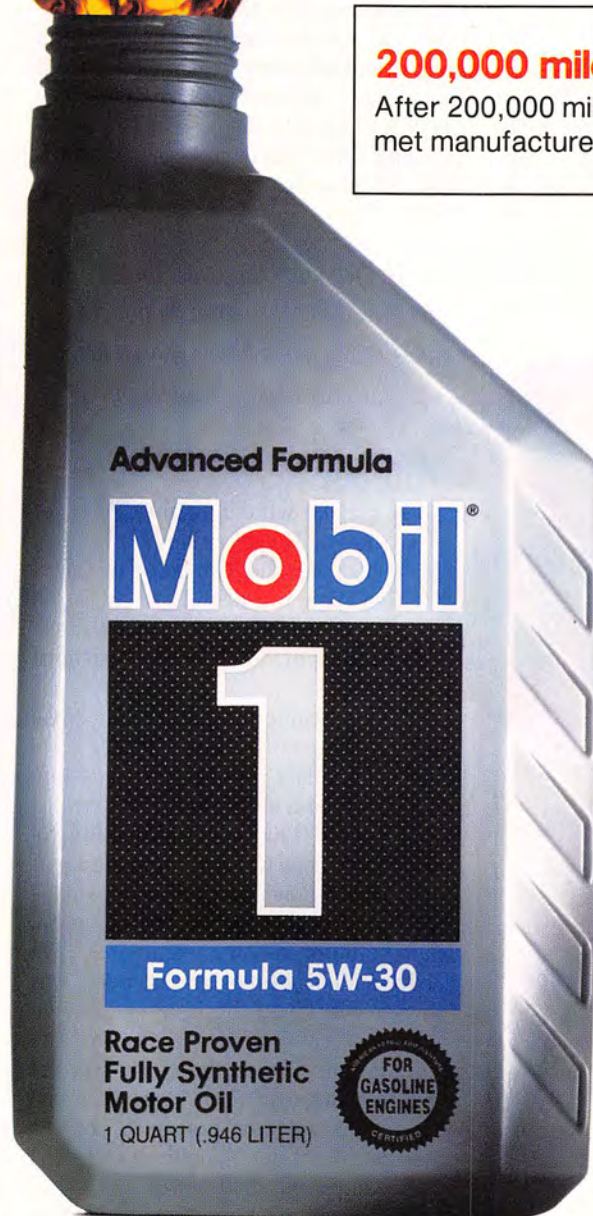
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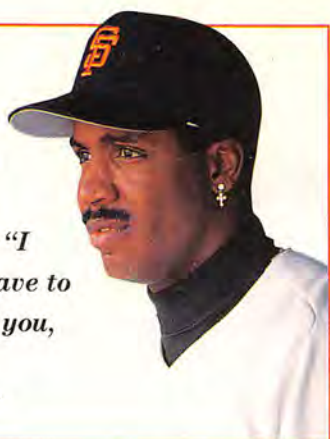
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Bonds to the media: "I don't have to talk to you, and I won't."



OTTO GREUTER/AL SPORT

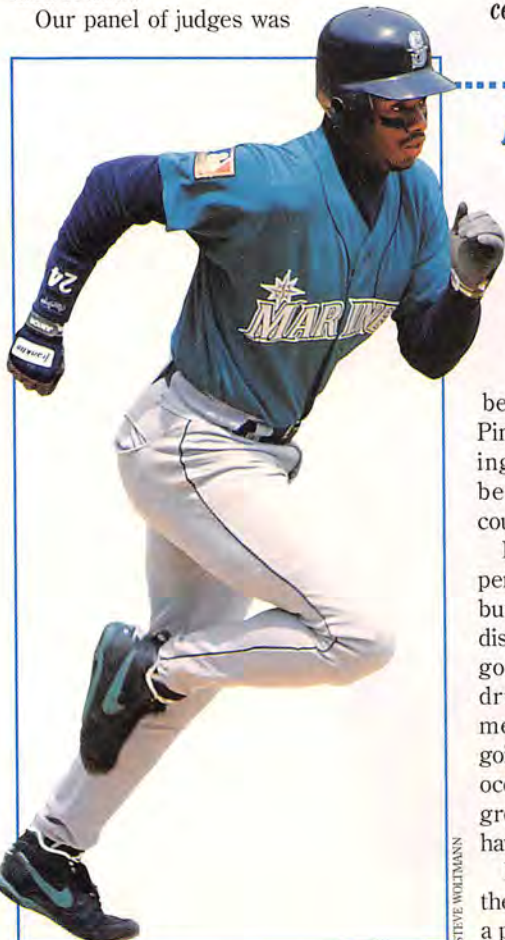
So does Barry get the edge in this category? Not necessarily. Says Thrift: "When I scouted Griffey in high school, I hadn't seen reactions and quickness like he demonstrated since Willie Mays was in his prime."

□ Rating: Bonds 8, Griffey 8.

Defense

Griffey is so confident of his defensive abilities he can afford to sit back and smile. "Is defense or offense my biggest kick in the game today?" he says. "Hey, there's no difference. I enjoy both. If I hit a home run or rob somebody of a home run by grabbing a ball that's gone over the fence—well, to me, it's the same thing, the same kind of thrill."

Our panel of judges was



STEVE WELTMANN

nigh-unanimous that Bonds is one of the game's best, but that Junior has a stronger arm than Barry and a superior glove. "I like the way Griffey takes pride in his defense," says Rodgers. "You know, you once could look at Junior and Canseco and Juan Gonzalez and say they all were in the same mold, that each could do it all. But Canseco and Gonzalez have become one-dimensional players in the last couple of years: hit the ball, get the bucks, and to hell with defense. Not Junior."

Adds Williams: "I lean slightly to Griffey over Bonds. You can build an entire team around Junior."

"When I was playing, Leo Durocher used to preach and preach about how he had to have a great defensive backbone—good arms and gloves up the middle—in order to have a great team. Well, Junior is the backbone—or the top of the backbone—of a strong team defense. He's a great defensive center fielder, period. Both he and Barry are Gold Glovers, but Griffey can do a lot more on defense."

□ Rating: Griffey 8.5 (arm 9, glove 8), Bonds 7.5 (arm 8, glove 7).

Griffey hasn't matched Bonds on the basepaths—even Junior concedes Barry has a better shot at being the next Rickey Henderson.

Attitude

No matter what anyone thinks of Griffey or Bonds as human beings, nobody in either clubhouse can question their work ethic. Each knows what he needs to do to provide maximum output; each does it without slacking.

"Since I came to Seattle, Junior has been our hardest-working player," says Piniella. "And last year he started assuming team leadership qualities without being asked. That was something he couldn't have done two or three years ago."

In contrast, Bonds remains an enigma—perhaps purposely—not only to the media, but to some of his own teammates. "We discovered a long time ago that Barry was going to march to the beat of his own drummer," says Thrift, "and all of the media complaints in the world weren't going to change that." On more than one occasion, the superstar has announced to a group of ink-stained supplicants: "I don't have to talk to you, and I won't."

Forget media relations, though. More to the point, for purposes of analyzing him as a player, is the relationship Bonds has with



DON SMITH

his own teammates—and at times that can be shaky, too. Last year, for instance, Barry publicly commented on teammate Matt Williams' lack of speed and excess of girth. (He later insisted he was just joking.) More often, according to other Giants, he has little to say to anybody in the San Francisco locker room. Reliever Rod Beck recalls trying to engage Bonds in casual conversation and failing to elicit any kind of a response. Now, Beck says, Bonds' failure to make clubhouse small talk doesn't surprise him, and he also says it's no big deal as far as he's concerned.

Bonds' Lone Ranger approach isn't a big deal, though—not when you consider the bottom line. "The thing you have to love about both Barry and Junior is that neither fame nor money has affected their performances," says Billy Williams. "Barry signs the biggest contract in baseball history, and then goes out and wins the MVP in his first year of the deal. Junior gets a big multiyear deal of his own [\$24 million for four years] and just misses winning the American League homer title in his first year of the contract."

"But none of their 1993 numbers surprises me a bit. Why? Because they're the sons of major league fathers who came from an era when baseball was baseball. Both Barry and Junior grew up in big-league clubhouses, where the guys used to sit around and talk baseball, live baseball, and

breathe baseball. These two young men have baseball in their blood—and they love it.”

□ Rating: Griffey 9, Bonds 8.

Intangibles

Oakland's Dennis Eckersley, who started the 1994 season with more American League saves (275) than any relief pitcher in history, says he's constantly intrigued by Griffey's approach to the game.

"I watch him in the dugout and when he takes the field, and he always seems to be smiling or laughing," Eckersley says. "He'll run out to center field and stop at second base to have a two-minute chat with the umpire. He'll wear his cap backward right up until it's time for the first pitch of the inning—when he has to be in 'proper' attire.

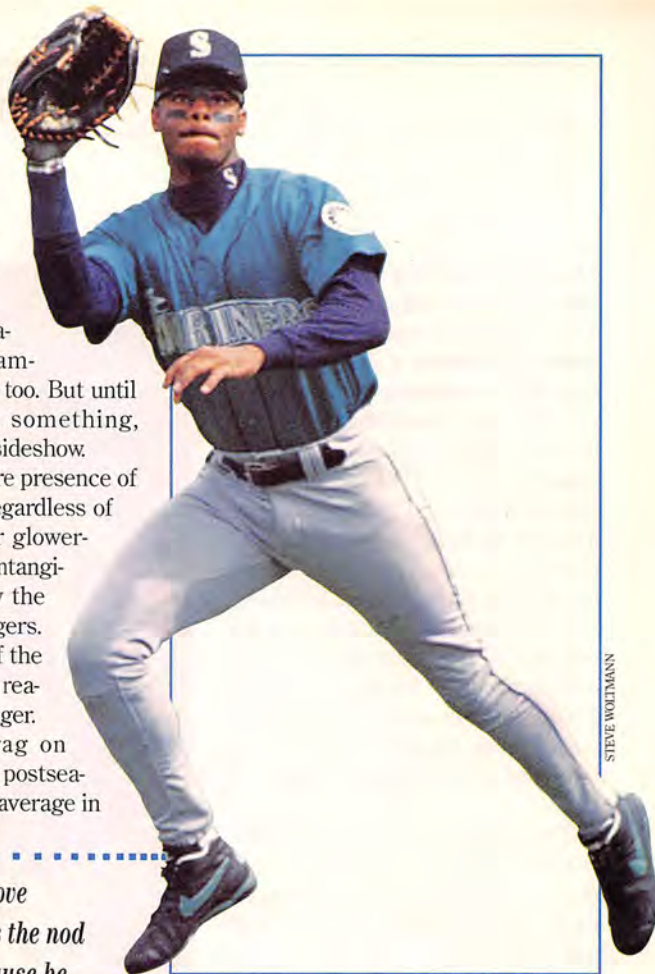
"Sometimes I start to grind inside when I look at Junior. I say to myself: 'Wait a minute! What's going on? Damn it, to me this is work. What I'm doing is a business.' But when you have as much talent as Junior does, I guess you can relax a little. For me, though, it's hard to even think about having that kind of talent."

Junior takes Eckersley's remarks in the light in which they were intended: as a compliment. He smiles and says: "Sure, baseball still is a game to me. Sure, I'm having fun. What am I supposed to do on the field? Be evil?"

Joie de vivre can be contagious. It can influence teammates to be loose and happy, too. But until the Mariners finally win something, Griffey's good cheer is just a sideshow.

On the other hand, the mere presence of Bonds has visible results—regardless of whether Barry is smiling or glowering. "If you're talking about intangibles, you have to give Barry the edge over Junior," says Rodgers. "Barry knows the nuances of the game better—if for no other reason than he's been around longer.

"Some people like to rag on Bonds because of his career postseason batting problems [a .191 average in



STEVE WOLTMANN

Bonds is a Gold Glove

left fielder, but Griffey gets the nod on defense—perhaps because he enjoys it more.

three losing National League Championship Series with Pittsburgh from '90 to '92]. All I can say is that if the Pirates hadn't had Barry in those three seasons, there wouldn't have been any postseason play for them in the first place."

□ Rating: Bonds 9, Griffey 8.

Tiebreaker

If you've been scoring at home, you know that to this point both Bonds and Griffey—after all of the physical and mental aspects of their talents have been assessed, analyzed, and dissected—have amassed 42.5 points out of a possible 50. Therefore, inevitably, we have no choice but to reach for their birth certificates to break the tie—certificates that show Griffey, 24, to be four years, seven months, and 27 days younger than Bonds, who turned 30 in July.

Give youth the nod. The age difference isn't automatically a key factor, but it becomes most meaningful when you consider the following statistics through the 1993 season:

- Number of .300 seasons before 25th birthday: Griffey four, Bonds none.
- Number of 100-RBI seasons before 25th birthday: Griffey four, Bonds none.
- Number of 30-homer seasons before

25th birthday: Griffey two, Bonds none.

Says Williams: "If you want to sign one particular guy, you have to go with Junior because of his age, and also because he's a one-of-a-kind center fielder."

Remember, you're considering a five-year pact. "Under the premise put forward, you have to take Griffey," says Rodgers. "Look, Barry Bonds is the best player in baseball right now—end of that discussion. But you wouldn't want to pay him that kind of money four years from now because he won't be worth that much then.

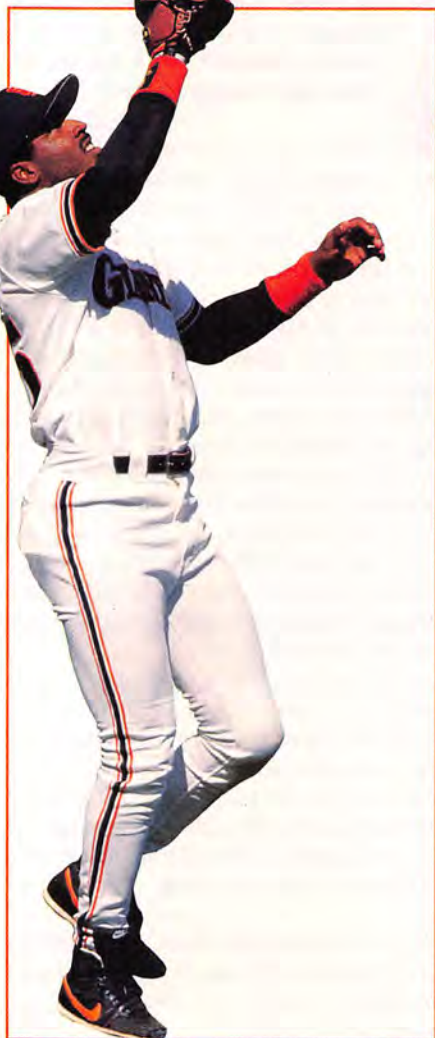
"The way I look at it is this: If you're talking a three-year deal, you want to get Bonds for your team. If you're talking five years, you want Junior."

Even with the tiebreaker, this has been a difficult contest to call. So, let's get just one more opinion—from Oakland A's manager Tony La Russa. Tony, which of the two would you sign, under the circumstances?

"Neither," La Russa says. "[Toronto second baseman] Robbie Alomar is the best player in baseball. I'd make the offer to Robbie."

Somewhere, Junior probably is laughing. We doubt Barry is. ■

Choosing between Griffey and Bonds wasn't nearly as tough as what we asked DAVE NIGHTINGALE to do in our June issue: select the 20 greatest baseball players of all time.



JEFF CARLISLE

I have a bet with a friend that Dan Marino's passer rating for the 1984 season was above 100. What was Marino's rating for '84? How is this statistic calculated?

J.F., East Rochester, N.Y.

Tell your buddy to pony up. Marino's passer rating for 1984 was 108.9, the fourth-highest of all time and an astounding figure for a second-year quarterback. Joe Montana's 1989 rating of 112.4 with the 49ers is the best ever. The immortal Milt Plum is second on the list; he compiled a rating of 110.4 for the Cleveland Browns in 1960. Montana also tops the career passer rating list at 93.1. Steve Young is second at 93.0. Marino, at 88.1, is third.

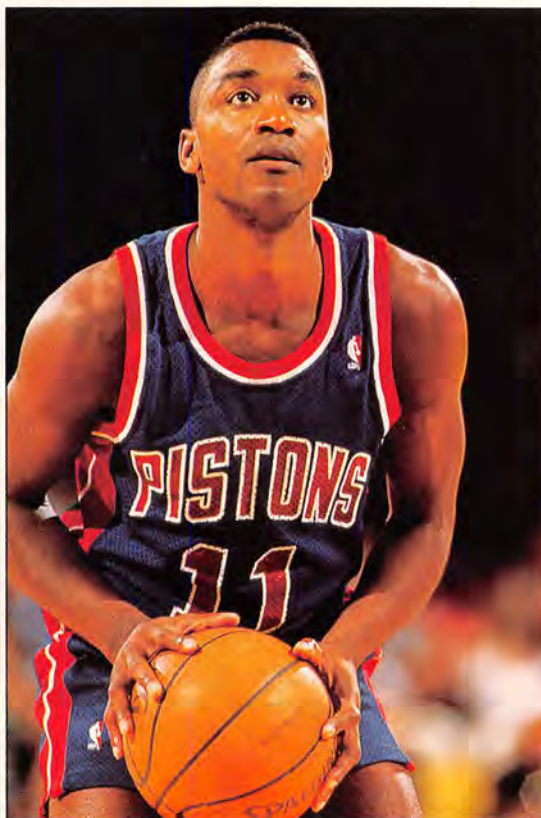
The rating system is complicated. It considers four criteria—completions, touchdown passes, interceptions, and average gain—per pass attempt. A passer's performance is graded from 0.000 to 2.375 in each category, 1.000 being the average. The sum of a passer's points in the four categories then is converted to a scale of 100 by dividing by .06.

The benchmarks for an average (1,000) performance in each category are a completion percentage of 50.0, touchdown percentage of 5.0, interception percentage of 5.5, and 7.00 yards per pass attempt. A passer with those marks would have a total score of 4.000, which translates to a passer rating of 66.7 (4.000/.06). Benchmarks for outstanding (1,500) performance are a 60.0 completion percentage, 7.5 TD percentage, 3.5 interception percentage, and 9.00 yards per attempt. Those marks would yield a score of 6.000, which translates to a passer rating of 100.0 (6.000/.06).

For those of you still with us, here's the formula for computing passer rating:

$$\left(\frac{\text{COMP. PCT.}-30}{20}\right) + \left(\frac{\text{TD PCT.}}{5}\right) + \left(\frac{9.5-\text{INT. PCT.}}{4}\right) + \left(\frac{\text{AVG. GAIN}-3.00}{4}\right) \times .06$$

Let's see how Marino's 1984 passer rating is computed. He completed 362 of 564 passes for 5,084 yards, with 48 touchdowns and 17 interceptions, so his raw figures are: completion percentage: 362/564 = 64.18; TD percentage: 48/564 = 8.51; interception percentage: 17/564 = 3.01; and



Isiah was a big-time scorer and assist man—but please don't ask about his passer rating.

average gain: 5,084/564 = 9.01. (Note: the more decimal places you allow for, the more accurate your calculations will be.)

Now applying the formula, we get: 1.709 + 1.702 + 1.6225 + 1.5025 = 6.536. And 6.536/.06 = 108.9. It's that simple!

The passer rating system comes in for its share of criticism, first of all because it is so arcane and complex, and secondly because it fails to take into account intangibles such as leadership and clutch performance that set great quarterbacks apart from the rest. For instance, the all-time top 20 in career passer rating includes the likes of Neil Lomax (seventh), Dave Krieg (11), Danny White (14), and Ken O'Brien (17); 11 of the top 20 were active in the 1993 season. Meanwhile, Hall-of-Famers Sammy Baugh, Y.A. Tittle, Johnny Unitas, Terry Bradshaw, and Dan Fouts don't make the cut. The NFL stresses that the system is meant to rate passers, not quarterbacks—but who would you take to throw that crucial pass: Lomax or Unitas?

Has any NBA player averaged 20 points per game and accumulated 1,000

assists in the same season?

B.J., Oak Park, Mich.

Just one: Isiah Thomas. In 1984-85 Zeke compiled 1,123 assists and averaged 21.2 ppg. Here are the eight 1,000-assist seasons in NBA history, ranked by the scoring averages for the players in question.

Player, Team, Season	Asst.	PPG
I. Thomas, Detroit, '84-85	1,123	21.2
J. Stockton, Utah, '89-90	1,134	17.2
J. Stockton, Utah, '90-91	1,164	17.2
J. Stockton, Utah, '88-89	1,118	17.1
J. Stockton, Utah, '91-92	1,126	15.8
K. Porter, Detroit, '78-79	1,099	15.4
J. Stockton, Utah, '93-94	1,031	15.1
J. Stockton, Utah, '87-88	1,128	14.7

Phil Rizzuto and Pee Wee Reese were both standout shortstops during the '40s and '50s, but Reese was inducted into the Hall of Fame a decade earlier than Rizzuto. Why did Reese make it in before Rizzuto? Were his career stats significantly higher?

S.P., St. Louis

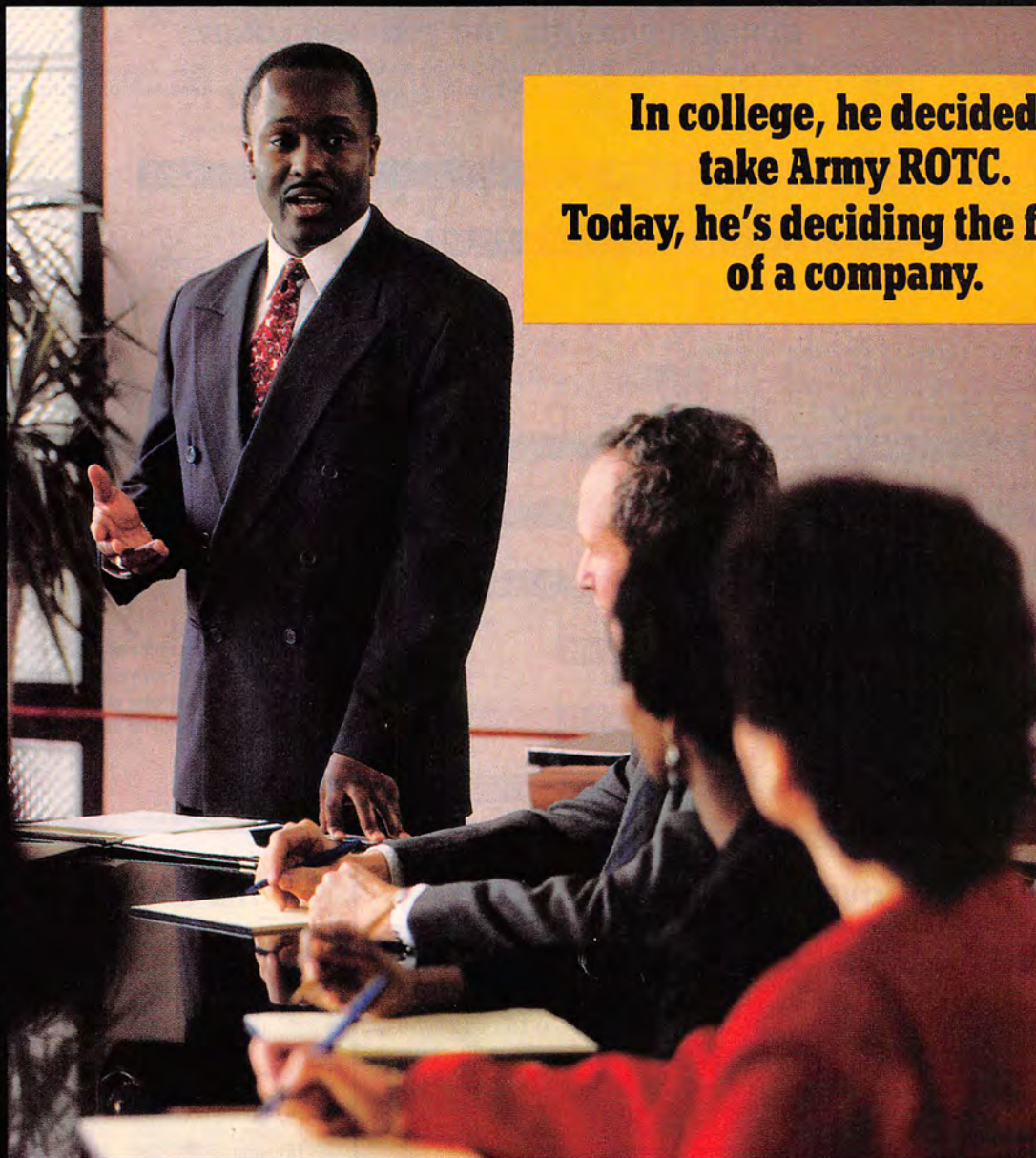
These two shortstops defined the position during their tenures, and in many respects their careers were similar. Team leaders both, Rizzuto

was the American League's MVP in 1950 and had nine World Series appearances and five All-Star Game nods in a 13-year career. Reese seven World Series appearances and 10 consecutive All-Star nominations in his 16 years. Rizzuto's fielding average was slightly higher than Reese's (.968 to .962), but Reese's hitting stats were consistently better. Pee Wee had significantly more at-bats (8,058 to 5,816), runs (1,338 to 877), and hits (2,170 to 1,588), and better power (126 home runs to Rizzuto's 38). Rizzuto's batting average was slightly higher, however: .273 to .269.

Despite their exemplary play at their position, neither player made it to Cooperstown on the strength of sportswriters' votes; the veterans' committee inducted Reese in 1984 and Rizzuto this year. Beyond a look at the stats, Reese's apparent greater appeal to the veterans' committee is a matter of speculation. ■

To get the behind-the-scenes scoops that the record books don't always cover, send your questions to Inside Out, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, IL 60201.

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NUMBERS

BURNING BRIGHTLY, BUT FOR HOW LONG?

What can Emmitt Smith, Barry Sanders, and Thurman Thomas expect for the remainder of their careers—long and fruitful production à la Walter Payton, or a burnout like that of Earl Campbell? Here are the 10 running backs who compiled the most rushing yardage in their first four seasons, and how they fared over the remainder of their careers:

(11 seasons: 2,970 carries; 4.46 average; 13,259 yards)

E. Dickerson 1,465; 4.76 **6,968** 7: 1,505; 4.18 **6,291**

(8 seasons: 2,187 carries; 4.30 average; 9,407 yards)

E. Campbell 1,404; 4.60 **6,457** 4: 783; 3.77 **2,950**

(4 seasons: 1,262 carries; 4.52 average; 5,699 yards)

E. Smith 1,262; 4.52 **5,699**

(5 seasons: 1,432 carries; 4.74 average; 6,789 yards)

B. Sanders 1,189; 4.77 **5,674** 1: 243; 4.59 **1,115**

(13 seasons: 3,836 carries; 4.36 average; 16,726 yards)

W. Payton 1,179; 4.51 **5,316** 9: 2,657; 4.29 **11,410**

(9 seasons: 2,359 carries; 5.22 average; 12,312 yards)

J. Brown 964; 5.24 **5,055** 5: 1,395; 5.20 **7,257**

(14 seasons: 2,562 carries; 4.01 average; 10,273 yards)

O.J. Anderson 1,105; 4.45 **4,920** 10: 1,457; 3.67 **5,353**

(6 seasons: 1,731 carries; 4.41 average; 7,631 yards)

T. Thomas 1,064; 4.45 **4,737** 2: 667; 4.34 **2,894**

(12 seasons: 2,296 carries; 4.05 average; 9,309 yards)

M. Allen 1,081; 4.29 **4,638** 8: 1,215; 3.84 **4,671**

(12 seasons: 2,939 carries; 4.33 average; 12,739 yards)

T. Dorsett 1,026; 4.51 **4,624** 8: 1,913; 4.24 **8,115**

■ Yards rushing, first four years (active players)
■ Yards rushing, first four years (retired players)
■ Yards rushing, remainder of career (active players)
■ Yards rushing, remainder of career (retired players)

OVER AND UNDER

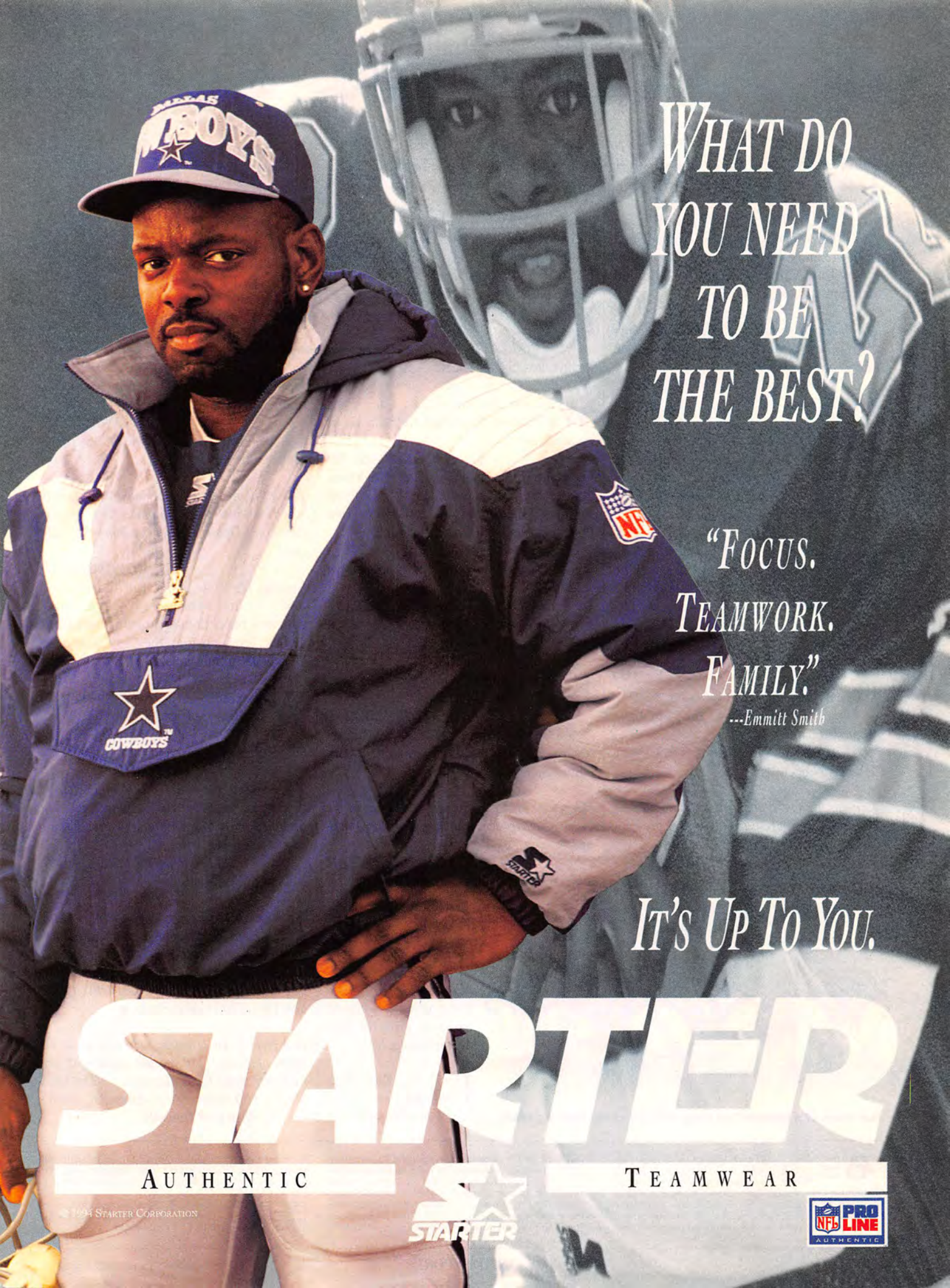
Here are the NFL teams ranked by all-time winning percentages (including AFL years), how far above or below .500 each team is, and how each would have to perform each season under a variety of scenarios to drop or climb to a .500 mark all-time:

Winners	Years	W	L	T	Pct.	Games above	Seasons to .500 if each year the team goes:		
							0-16	4-12	7-9
L.A. Raiders	34	324	199	11	.617	125	8	16	63
Miami	28	269	171	4	.610	98	7	13	49
Chicago	74	586	384	42	.600	202	13	26	101
Dallas	34	318	215	6	.596	103	7	13	52
Cleveland	44	368	268	10	.577	100	7	13	50
San Francisco	44	349	283	13	.551	66	5	9	33
N.Y. Giants	69	505	413	32	.548	92	6	12	46
Washington	61	450	377	26	.543	73	5	10	37
Minnesota	33	275	231	9	.543	44	3	6	22
Green Bay	73	507	427	36	.541	80	5	10	40
L.A. Rams	57	407	357	20	.532	50	4	7	25
Kansas City	34	261	240	12	.520	21	2	3	11
Buffalo	34	278	268	8	.509	10	1	2	5
Losers	Years	W	L	T	Pct.	Games below	Seasons to .500 if each year the team goes:		
							16-0	12-4	9-7
San Diego	34	250	253	11	.497	3	1	1	2
Detroit	64	409	420	32	.494	11	1	2	6
Denver	34	250	258	10	.492	8	1	1	4
Indianapolis	41	289	302	7	.489	13	1	2	7
Pittsburgh	61	390	424	20	.480	34	3	5	17
Houston	34	243	272	6	.472	29	2	4	15
Cincinnati	26	187	212	1	.469	25	2	4	13
Seattle	18	130	153	0	.459	23	2	3	12
Philadelphia	61	363	434	24	.457	71	5	9	36
N.Y. Jets	34	226	277	8	.450	51	4	7	26
New England	34	225	276	9	.450	51	4	7	26
Arizona	74	386	526	39	.426	140	9	18	70
New Orleans	27	160	241	5	.400	81	6	11	41
Atlanta	28	158	259	5	.380	101	7	13	51
Tampa Bay	18	82	197	1	.295	115	8	15	58

THE COSTS OF KICKERS

Compared to a kicker hitting at the league average of 76.9%, Gary Anderson of the Steelers, who hit on 28 of 30 attempts for a 93.3% mark, earned the Steelers 15 additional points. In contrast, poor kicking cost the Redskins and Patriots significantly on the scoreboard.

Team	FG	FGA	Pct.	Expected		
				if Avg.	Diff.	Pts.
Pittsburgh	28	30	.933	23	5	15
Atlanta	26	27	.963	21	5	15
Kansas City	26	29	.897	22	4	12
Houston	29	34	.853	26	3	9
Green Bay	31	37	.838	28	3	9
Indianapolis	26	31	.839	24	2	6
Dallas	30	37	.811	29	2	6
New Orleans	28	35	.800	27	1	3
L.A. Raiders	35	44	.795	34	1	3
Detroit	34	43	.791	33	1	3
Seattle	23	28	.821	22	1	1
San Diego	31	40	.775	31	0	0
N.Y. Giants	26	34	.765	26	0	0
Cincinnati	24	31	.774	24	0	0
Tampa Bay	16	22	.727	17	-1	-3
Arizona	21	28	.750	22	-1	-3
Minnesota	26	35	.743	27	-1	-3
Miami	24	32	.750	25	-1	-3
Denver	26	35	.743	17	-1	-3
Cleveland	16	22	.727	17	-1	-3
Chicago	27	36	.750	28	-1	-3
Philadelphia	16	23	.696	18	-2	-6
L.A. Rams	16	23	.696	18	-2	-6
Buffalo	23	32	.719	25	-2	-6
N.Y. Jets	17	26	.654	20	-3	-9
San Francisco	16	26	.615	20	-4	-12
New England	19	31	.613	24	-5	-15
Washington	16	28	.571	22	-6	-18
NFL Total	676	879	.769	—	—	—

A black and white photograph of Emmitt Smith, a former NFL player, wearing a Starter jacket and a Dallas Cowboys cap. He is looking off to the side with a serious expression. In the background, a blurred image of a football player in a helmet is visible.

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YOU NEED
TO BE
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---Emmitt Smith

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THE GOOD DOCTOR

I understand Scottie Pippen has been very active since the NBA playoffs ended. How did Scottie spend his summer?

P.J., PROPHETSTOWN, ILL.

First Pippen played 17 holes of golf. Then he bowled nine frames. He lost a set of tennis to Toni Kukoc 0-5. And he attended eight innings of a Cubs game.

Where do you think the Dallas Cowboys will end up this season under coach Barry Switzer?

G.G., IDABEL, OKLA.

On probation.

What was the most popular potential name being bandied about for Vancouver's new NBA franchise?

P.Q., ESQUIMALT, B.C.

The Ca-Knicks.

Kathy Smith has that infomercial with Chris Evert where they exercise by speed-walking down the highway. What's this program called?

G.O., BEL ALTON, MD.

"Kathy Smith's Don't Accidentally Get Run Down by a Bus Workout."

Would you happen to know the name of that TV show about the bald little Minnesota outfielder?

S.E., LIDGERWOOD, N.D.

"Puckett Fences."

I cannot believe that the Los Angeles Rams wasted a first-round draft choice on Ghandi. He's a pacifist—and so thin!

C.K., ALEXANDRIA, IND.

Gandy, not Ghandi, stupid.

Jerry Glanville now is a stock car driver. What is ol' Jerry's ultimate goal?

D.E., SYLACAUGA, ALA.

To have Elvis on his pit crew.

Let's say Cleveland still doesn't win a pennant this year. What happens then?

A.B., BELLAIRE, OHIO

Jacob takes his field back.

Who are the favorites at the Fred Flintstone Memorial Golf Classic at Pebble Beach?

B.R., BEDFORD, VA.

I'm picking Quarry Pavin, Jack Bricklaus, Greg Oremán, David Pebbles, Fred Rubbles, Shale Irwin, Fuzzy Boulder, Ben Crenstone, and Chi Chi Rockriguez.

In the movie "Maverick," what happens at the end?

Q.B., NEW BRAUNFELS, TEXAS

Even with another lottery pick, Maverick goes 20-62 and misses the playoffs.

Is it true that Seattle is dropping "Super" from the name "SuperSonics"?

G.K., HOQUIAM, WASH.

Actually, since the playoffs many hometown fans have asked them to drop the name "Seattle."

Just how long was Roseanne married to the Nebraska coach, and why did they break up?

J.G., GROUSE CREEK, UTAH

Tom Arnold, not Tom Osborne, dummy.

Do you have any advice on how the great relief pitcher Lee Smith can get as much attention as Rollie Fingers did?

R.P., JAMESTOWN, LA.

Are you kidding? I'm the one who advised Smitty to grow the handlebar mustache.

I know New York City is influential in TV circles, but is it true that



"Jerry, how many times have I told you—don't be cruel."

Manhattan big shots are even demanding changes in the new "Superman" TV series?

D.C., ANSONIA, CONN.

It's true. From now on, Clark Kent is being replaced by Jeff Kent.

Golf is my game—especially women's golf. How come those Ammacapane women, Dina and Danielle, don't get more publicity, Doc?

L.P., MORENCI, ARIZ.

Simple. It's their name. But there's good news: To help the press, the Ammacapanes have decided to shorten their names. From now on, they'll be known as Di and Da Ammacapane.

What items are most rarely reported stolen to the Houston police?

M.L., SHIPROCK, N.M.

Oilers championship rings.

I hear Ted Baxter, Lou Grant, Mary Richards, and Murray Slaughter have been assigned by a Minneapolis TV network to cover some boxer. Who?

R.M., GRANITE FALLS, MINN.

Michael Tyler Mooror.

Is there anyone coach David Shula of the Cincinnati Bengals finds more intimidating than No. 1 draft pick Dan (Big Daddy) Wilkinson?

P.A., MIAMISBURG, OHIO

Yes, Don (Big Daddy) Shula. ■

In a fever to know what really goes on in the world of sports? Will you feel awful until you find out? Send for a diagnosis to: The Good Doctor, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201—then wait patiently.



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By ERIC STOLTZ

The Grandeur That Is the Garden

I WAS A BIG FOOTBALL FAN until I realized I could never play the game because of my lack of girth. And then, I guess because I actually could shoot baskets, I became a basketball fan. There's something about a hands-on experience that makes for a special connection. I know the feel of a basketball. I know the feel of bobbing and weaving, dribbling around the guy guarding you, and going up for a basket.

I'm a total New York Knicks fan nowadays. I split my time between New York and Los Angeles, so I get a chance to indulge my passion for the Knicks whenever I go East. The excitement begins even before the players take the court. It's an event; I always feel as if I'm in ancient Rome when I walk into Madison Square Garden. It's awesome, the feeling I get. It's like I'm witnessing some public execution—really. Emotions run high at these games, and being there in person puts you right in the middle of an extraordinary event, because these guys are such giants. When they run down the court, your seat jiggles. The floor actually moves under their pounding weight. I secretly wish I could be out there, all pumped up and taking the challenge with those incredible players.

As a kid I looked up to athletes, individuals who seemed more than mortal. Today I don't have the same adulation, but I certainly admire the skills and courage of certain guys. I'm impressed with the cohesiveness that individuals create from their separate talents. Teamwork wins games, but it wins admiration for outstanding players, too.

The Knicks have a history of putting on a scoring blitz just before the end of each quarter. This come-from-behind offense is thrilling to watch. The blood starts pumping, and by the time the players sit down, we fans are on our feet, so charged up each one of us feels as if we made the baskets. I



When I walk into Madison Square Garden, I feel like I'm witnessing a public execution in ancient Rome.

think everyone who's a sports fan fantasizes about himself out there, in the battle.

Patrick Ewing is astounding. He's a giant. Looking up from courtside, I always get a thrill just watching his hands, eyes, and feet. He is totally coordinated. He's an amazing presence, so it's not surprising that he leads the team. I think the other players respect and admire him.

John Starks is a dynamo. He draws energy from some inner space. You know he's coiled and ready to score from the minute he takes the floor. There's been a lot of talk about his aggressiveness, but basketball is not a genteel sport. It's very aggressive, and it takes a feisty player to stay on top.

Charles Oakley gives everything he's got in a game—sheer guts and courage. And when he talks to sportswriters after a game he gives excellent assessments, on-target analyses. He says the fans are

important, and Garden fans support the Knicks, no question. But as he says, "It's the players who shoot the baskets."

Once at a Knicks game I saw the great Julius Erving play. That's something I'll always remember. He was so extraordinary; even now, as I recall seeing him, I get a chill. His physical presence commanded attention in a unique way. Watching him bound down the court was like watching a giant tiger run by. It's strange, but that's what I remember—a tiger. My first emotion was fear. You're just grateful he doesn't turn on you and snap you in half. It was astonishing.

That's the difference between seeing basketball in person and seeing it on TV. Being there in person, up close, is terrifying and exciting and quite wonderful. On TV it's so two-dimensional, but in person it's like watching an incredible force, raw and potent. Pro players are fantastic, with such predatory grace. I always wished that I was like that. But I'm not.

It takes a lot for a player to capture my attention. And although I'm a true Knicks fan, I was and still am a Charles Barkley fan. He has talked about retiring, but over the years he entertained me. Barkley was not only an amazing player, but such a personality that he really stood out. He wasn't

always good, and he wasn't always right, but he was always interesting and outspoken. I appreciate that.

The only thing I don't like are the ads he does. I saw some TV ads with him, and I was really disappointed. I don't like to see people I admire selling sugar water, even though they're making millions off it. It cheapens their allure. These athletes are millionaires, from what they do naturally and do well. They don't need to go overboard with commercialization. They're obviously just hawking products for the money. And it's tawdry. Fans always hold players to a high standard. We hate to be disappointed. ■

ERIC STOLTZ appears in the film "Pulp Fiction," which won top prize at the 1994 Cannes Film Festival. His new film, "Killing Zoe," opens in mid-September.



Soundgarden—Superunknown. Title cut; Spoonman; Let Me Down; more. (A&M) 475•186



Counting Crows—August And Everything After. Mr. Jones; Round Here; Time And Time Again; Sullivan Street; Rain King; more. (DGC) 467•944



Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers—Greatest Hits. Free Fallin'; etc. (MCA) 474•411



Bonnie Raitt—Longing In Their Hearts. Love Sneakin' Up On You; You; etc. (Capitol) 477•505

"8 Seconds"—Orig. Sndtrk. (MCA/Nashville) 475•483

Confederate Railroad—Notorious (Atlantic) 475•194

10,000 Maniacs—MTV Unplugged (Elektra) 469•775

Bryan Adams—So Far So Good (A&M) 467•738

Reba McEntire—Grt. Hits, Vol. Two (MCA) 467•316

George Strait—Easy Come, Easy Go (MCA) 467•308

Gin Blossoms—New Miserable Experience (A&M) 463•737

Billy Joel—River Of Dreams (Columbia) 463•695

Nine Inch Nails—The Downward Spiral (TVT/Interscope) 476•739

Beck—Mellow Gold (DGC) 476•721

Green Day—Dookie (Reprise) 476•549

Elton John—Duets (MCA) 472•845

"Schindler's List"—Orig. Sndtrk. (MCA) 472•795

Cassandra Wilson—Blue Light 'Til Dawn (Blue Note) 471•656

Stanley Jordan—Bolero (Arista) 475•095

Heart—Desire Walks On (Capitol) 471•292

Pet Shop Boys—Very (EMI) 468•819

"Even Cowgirls Get The Blues"—Orig. Sndtrk. (Sire/Warner Bros.) 468•694

Genesis—Live/The Way We Walk, Vol. 1: The Shorts (Atlantic) 467•373

Suzy Bogguss—Something Up My Sleeve (Liberty) 465•997

Bruce Springsteen—Born In The U.S.A. (Columbia) 328•629

Sheryl Crow—Tuesday Night Music Club (A&M) 476•531

Bob James—Restless (Warner Bros.) 476•309

Richard Marx—Paid Vacation (Capitol) 474•973

Tori Amos—Under The Pink (Atlantic) 473•207

Collin Raye—Extremes (Epic) 473•025

Melissa Etheridge—Yes I Am (Island) 466•763

Mark Chesnutt—Almost Goodbye (MCA) 463•273

Van Halen—Live: Right Here, Right Now (Warner Bros.) 454•470/394•478

George Benson—Love Remembers (Warner Bros.) 439•265

Pantera—Vulgar Display Of Power (ATCO) 435•305

Tina Turner—Simply The Best (Capitol) 433•342

Frank Sinatra—Duets (Capitol) 471•615

Yanni—"Live At The Acropolis" (Private Music) 475•178

Various Artists—All Men Are Brothers: A Tribute To Curtis Mayfield (Warner Bros.) 474•155

The Beavis & Butt-head Experience—Featuring Nirvana, Aerosmith, etc. (Geffen) 472•852

Various Artists—Stone Free: A Tribute To Jimi Hendrix (Reprise) 471•581

Ace Of Base—The Sign (Arista) 468•108

James—Laid (Mercury) 467•761

Clay Walker—(Giant) 467•449

The Breeders—Last Splash (Elektra) 465•351

Garth Brooks—In Pieces (Liberty) 463•745

Elvis Costello—Brutal Youth (Warner Bros.) 476•168

Morrissey—"Vauxhall & I" (Sire/Reprise) 476•341

Fourplay—Between The Sheets (Warner Bros.) 464•578

Ottmar Liebert & Luna Negra—The Hours Between Night & Day (Epic) 464•149

Danzig—Thrall-Deamonsweatire (American) 462•333

The Black Crowes—Shake Your Money-maker (American) 462•184

Barbra Streisand—Back To Broadway (Columbia) 461•988

Little Texas—Big Time (Warner Bros.) 460•204

Paul McCartney—All The Best (Capitol) 459•776

Deep Forest—(550 Music/Epic) 459•479

Glória Estefan—Mi Tierra (Epic) 458•497

Anthrax—Sound Of White Noise (Elektra) 458•489

John Cougar—American Fool (Riva) 423•566

Columbia House. The Face of Rock.



Various Artists—Rhythm, Country & Blues (MCA) 474•536

Meat Loaf—Bat Out Of Hell II: Back Into Hell (MCA) 458•232

Various Artists—Greenpeace: Alternative NRG. Featuring R.E.M., U2, Soundgarden, UB40, more. (Hollywood/Greenpeace) 478•750

Sammy Hagar—Unboxed (Geffen) 478•107

Proclaimers—Hit The Highway (Chrysalis) 477•513

Benedictine Monks Of Santo Domingo—Chant (Angel) 477•067



Celine Dion—The Colour Of My Love (550 Music/Epic) 467•662

Phish—Hoist (Elektra) 477•919

David Lee Roth—Your Filthy Little Mouth (Reprise) 476•333

Gerald Albright—Smooth (Atlantic) 475•152

Aerosmith—Get A Grip (Geffen) 458•075

Stone Temple Pilots—Core (Atlantic) 453•043

Pearl Jam—Ten (Epic/Associated) 428•433

Tony Bennett—Steppin' Out (Columbia) 467•431

Guns N' Roses—The Spaghetti Incident? (Geffen) 472•837

Alice In Chains—Jar Of Flies (Columbia) 471•979

Michael Bolton—The One Thing (Columbia) 470•005

Hancock/Shorter/Carter/Williams/Roney—A Tribute To Miles Davis (Qwest) 476•382

Neal McCoy—No Doubt About It (Atlantic) 474•619

The Benoit/Freeman Project (GRP) 474•429

Meat Puppets—Too High To Die (London) 474•221

"In The Name Of The Father"—Orig. Sndtrk. (Island) 474•213

Cheap Trick—Woke Up With A Monster (Warner Bros.) 474•148

The Brand New Heavies—Brother Sister (Delicious Vinyl) 478•305

The Best Of The Village People (Casablanca) 478•131

PM Dawn—The Bliss Album? (Gee Street/Island) 456•772

Gang Starr—Hard To Earn (Chrysalis) 476•176

K7—Swing Batta Swing (Tommy Boy) 474•866

Jade—Jade To The Max (Giant/Reprise) 453•068

Hammer—The Funky Headhunter (Giant/Reprise) 474•262

Jodeci—Diary Of A Mad Band (Uptown/MCA) 473•116

A Tribe Called Quest—Midnight Marauders (Jive) 472•860

Domino (Rat/Def Jam/Chaos/Columbia) 472•225

Various Artists—Common Thread: Songs Of The Eagles (Giant) 469•999

Nirvana—In Utero (DGC) 467•159

The Cranberries—Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We? (Island) 465•559

Faith Hill—Take Me As I Am (Warner Bros.) 473•728

Blackhawk (Arista) 473•397

Nirvana—Nevermind (DGC) 442•046

US3—Hand On The Torch (Blue Note) 471•342

Shaquille O'Neal—Shaq Diesel (Jive) 470•427

Zapp & Roger—All The Greatest Hits (Reprise) 470•344

Color Me Badd—Time And Chance (Giant/Reprise) 471•532

Dr. Dre—The Chronic (Death Row/Interscope) 461•970

Xscape—Hummin Comin At Cha' (So So Def/Columbia) 469•981

Tevin Campbell—I'm Ready (Qwest) 468•744

Aaron Hall—The Truth (Silas/MCA) 468•025

CeCe Peniston—Thought 'Ya Knew (A&M) 467•860

Prince—The Hits 1 (Paisley Park) 466•623

Snoop Doggy Dogg—Doggystyle (Death Row/Interscope) 465•955

Toni Braxton (LaFace) 464•362

Madonna—The Immaculate Collection (Sire/Warner Bros.) 414•557

Janet Jackson—Rhythm Nation 1814 (A&M) 388•918



Pearl Jam—Vs. (Epic/Associated) 465•427

"Philadelphia"—Orig. Sndtrk. Featuring B. Springsteen, N. Young, P. Gabriel, etc. (Epic Soundtrax) 472•928

Babyface—For The Cool In You (Epic) 464•222

Robin S—Show Me Love (Big Beat/Atlantic) 463•992

Tony Toni Toné—Sons Of Soul (Mercury) 463•679

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Queen Latifah—Black Reign (Motown) 471•466

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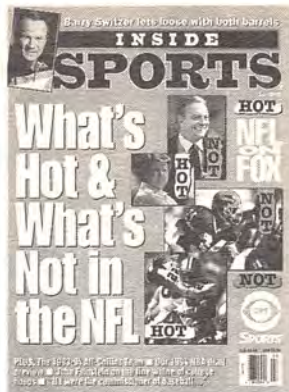
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